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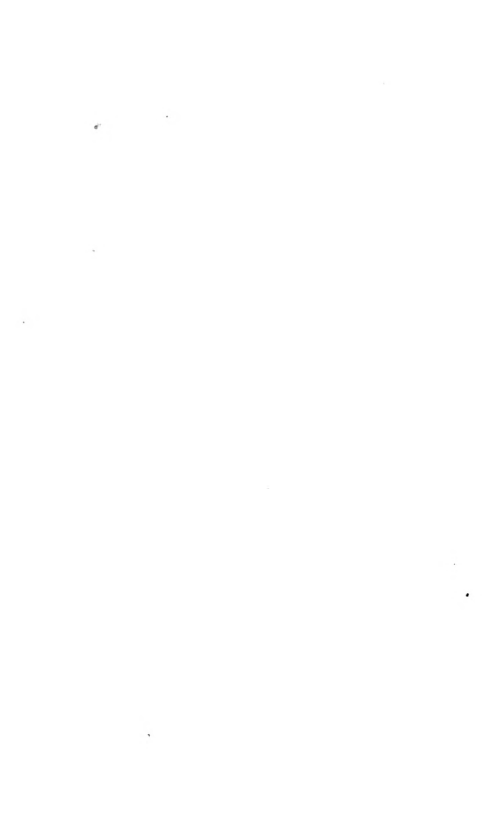
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THE ADVENTURES OF THE THREE WORTHIES

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THREE WORTHIES





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G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS, NEW YORK AND LONDON.

THE ADVENTURES OF THREE WORTHIES

L. C. L. Hunter

BY

CLINTON ROSS

AUTHOR OF "THE GALLERY OF A RANDOM COLLECTOR,"
"THE SILENT WORKMAN," "THE
SPECULATOR," ETC.

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS

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“A WELL MEANING BOOKE.”

(MONTAIGNE TO HIS READER THE FIRST OF
MARCH, 1580.)

NOW the adventures of these worthy gentlemen, one of modern, and one of old France, and the last of the England of the Stuarts, were told when the air was moist, and a pattering was on the roofs. For

“Whanne that April with his shoures sote,
The drought of March hath perced to the rote,”

the pilgrims Canterbury-ward “shall tellen tales tway.” When roads were sodden the witty Margaret of Navarre gave the seven days of her recital. So, like Montaigne, say I, “loe, here a well meaning Booke,” of

a fancied past on a rainy day in a chateau of Touraine by the Loire loved of Balzac. *Châteaux en Espagne* are owned by all men. For an hour did the Host—an evasive spirit of Romance—grant a *château en Touraine* by the charming stream, a setting for the tales. Adventure needs a frame, to fit its telling ; must be as carefully put as ever a canvas jealously hung at proper height, and in the light displaying the coloring, the drawing, or their sad lack. Of a race, dating on the spot from ancient time, a man of Paris, too, and the world, the Host deplored the bad weather as if his guests' discomforts brought him personal sadness. Through scurrying mists showed the marble figures of the Park, touched with a green coating from the moisture of the fountains, where these presided as calm classic deities, wrought by an artist of the Renaissance. Branches of scattered trees held here and there reluctant foliage ; and dead leaves floated on a stagnant moat. In-doors the

dusk lay heavy, half absorbing the carvings of the great fireplace, the mediæval mail on the oaken walls, the sleeping hounds by the hearth, the three men, weary perhaps of cigarettes and talk ; the sweet English face of Madame ; the coquettish contour of a woman of fashion ; the softer curves of an *ingénue*.

Out of the mysterious recesses of the place (dim as the retreats of the old, the forgotten of Romance) thence outstepped Monsieur, an English sentence on his lips : “ The past has its uses, if it lessen the *ennui* of a rainy afternoon.” From his pocket somewhere he dragged yellowed papers, old *MSS.*, lain away in forgotten crannies. One he said was the confession of a connection of his house long ago, who for his soul’s sake had taken holy orders.

The lady of fashion shivered. “ Must you add seriousness to the rain ? ” said she.

This intention the Host disavowed, turning you may believe gallant phrase. Sorry was

he that he could not offer the matter for a Parisian novel, of love and intrigue. But he had a simple tale of love, possibly pleasing to the *ingénue*, while likely dull to Madame. When the younger lady blushed, and the elder exclaimed, the urbane master of the place turned to a newer *MS.*, given him by an American, an executor of the famous Saint-Dernier. For the Saint-Derniers, like the Bonapartes, are related across the seas to those queer folk that swarm over Paris in summer ; of whom De Tocqueville wrote, and for whom an Orleans fought.

Such was the occasion in Touraine, by the Loire, land of the *Conte* and Balzac, while the rain pattered over the dead leaves in the still moat, and the tales left our fancies in the winding paths of Romance, where were plotting rogues, and their foils, fine manly fellows and fair ladies,—love, duty, revenge, making, when mixed, adventure.

Certain good people who now-a-days try to bind fiction to a local habitation and a

name, by the stout rope, “realism,” may dislike these simple tales, dealing first with a gentleman of modern France ; and then one with the confession of a great personage of long ago, turned priest, to be rid of a sad world ; and the last with a love escapade of an English boy, who grew old in the service of the Stuarts in exile and at Whitehall. These may ponder the words filched from John Florio’s version of the “good old Gallic Gentleman” :—“a well meaning Booke doth at the first entrance forewarne” you, “that in contriving the same I have proposed unto myself no other than a familiar and private end ; I have no respect, or consideration at all, either to” your “service, or to my glory.”



“ And he began with right a merye cheere
His tale anon, and seide as ye may heere.”

The Prologue, The Canterbury Tales.

I. VICOMTE DE SAINT-DERNIER



I.

VICOMTE DE SAINT-DERNIER

"Our history will oblige us to relate some matters of a more strange and surprising kind. . . . Some are, with M. Dacier, ready to allow that the same thing which is impossible may be yet probable."

"HENRY FIELDING *in Book VIII. of Tom Jones.*"

. That day I had been riding hard on a message of the Prince. The country was filled with danger to me, because my message was not trivial. Close behind was the orderly, Dumont, a tough-skinned, short, wrinkled and tanned fellow. Character lies open only to the adept reader on certain faces (and a fool may be boastful of the skill !). If I had been expert enough, I might have read volumes while the horses

lagged on, and the man, whose past was only a subject for my conjecture, was in some retrospect. As it was, while the lines were there, these might have been Persian, or any unknown gibberish; yet I knew something of men even then. I had found him of a January day shivering in the Court of the Palais Royale. For all of the explanations he had to offer, there were gaps plainly displayed by the furrows of the cheeks. I never was sure of his nationality, though, after I had known Constantinople, I suspected him of being a Turk. When the Emperor sent me as an attaché to the Turkish Embassy, for some reason of his own this valuable person—he had come to know my wishes almost intuitively—pleaded to remain in Paris. So persistent was he in this that I even was forced to accept his excuse. When, eight months later (we had been as far as India then), Chantillon and I came one July day into the court before the hotel upon the Avenue de l'Alma, we saw Gervaise Du-

mont smoking a pipe, as imperturbable as any Sioux, while Monsieur Argand's grooms stood, evidently regarding him with reverential awe. As we descended from the *fiacre* I pointed the fellow out to Chantillon. "Do you see that short, dark-skinned man?" I questioned. "Surely, a Turk or an Arab," declared my companion, lighting a cigarette, while the *concierge* jingled his keys (for the Hotel Saint-Dernier is the last of four buildings opening upon a court on the Avenue de l'Alma, not a block from the Avenue Champs-Élysées). "A rascal of a mongrel," cried I. Then I told him how I had been returning from a great ball one winter's night five years before, and the wine was singing in my veins, when, as the Rue Rivoli opens toward the *façade* of the Palais Royale, a dark figure rushed out wildly and tried to throw itself beneath the horses, which Pierre, the coachman, drew high on to their haunches in the nick of time. And, as I stood up, gesticulating and crying out, I suppose, I

saw this same dark-skinned Arab, whom the flaring gas-jets showed. The fellow disappeared as if by magic, leaving the coachman and me rubbing our eyes. "Doubtless in the Morgue to-morrow," said Pierre, whipping up his horses. That night—it might have been the wine—I fell to dreaming ; and in all of my dreams this dark, eager-faced fellow figured, gliding in and out, like some sad chorus. In the morning the cobwebs were out of my brain, after a brisk canter on my mare Cyrilla—the same which my cousin entered in the Derby, you may remember ;—but in the afternoon I chanced to be walking in the Palais Royale, where I think I had been after a diamond, when looking up I saw suddenly the same face on which the gas-jets had flared the night before. I am always impulsive, and suddenly I had seized that dark-skinned, wrinkled fellow (he must have been over fifty) by the shoulder. " Why did you try to throw yourself under my horses ?" He looked at me strangely for a moment.

“I have failed in everything, and I wished to make an end of failure,” said he, like one repeating commonplaces. Then I recalled Pierre, the coachman, pointing with forefinger toward the dark river. “The Seine?” My Turk, or Arab, or mongrel, whatever he might have been, smiled. “I took it for an omen, that I was not trod down by your horses, Monsieur, and I resolved to live another twenty-four hours. To-night——” and he pointed toward the Louvre, and the river beyond the Quai. “My man,” said I, “you have not eaten?” “Not in twenty-four hours.” “Do you know no one in Paris? Have you no money?” “Neither,” said he. “Monsieur, I told you truly; my world is dead, or rather I am dead to it. I have nothing for which to live. Yet, if you will give me a post in your household—for I know your name—I should esteem the favor a new lease of the life of which I am tired. If Monsieur will concede so much, he shall not find me lacking. For

I know some few languages, and I shall be useful."

So he went on, noting my mood, and, clever rascal that he was, profiting by it. This was the man whom Chantillon saw in the court off from the Avenue de l'Alma, who, as orderly, rode with me on the message of the Prince. Up to the time when we took our way over the sodden roads, fearing arrest at every turn, or a volley of bullets, I did not know more of Gervaise Dumont's early career. I found him invaluable, and, though at first his wicked face was distasteful enough, I found his ready wit and hand almost essentials, particularly on the long journeys which I was accustomed to take in those years. He spoke many tongues as if every one had descended by birthright. I know his English was passable, while in the German, Italian, Spanish, and a dozen minor dialects, his performance was quite as wonderful as that of the porter in a continental hotel. On the message of the Prince, as a hundred times

before, I wondered about his enigmatical face, while the heavy roadways made the progress slow enough, giving us certainly time for any reflection.

We then must have ridden twenty miles through the country abandoned between the two armies, and it was almost as if the very birds had stopped their notes. Rarely did we pass a human being ; some old woman bearing fagots, like a figure animated in a picture of Millet. I suppose the men for the most were in the armies. As the tired horses stepped on over the soggy ways, it seemed to me that I never had known so melancholy a landscape as this under the grayish sky. Suddenly a line of bright light broke through a rift in the heavy clouds. Then my man, Dumont, turning in the saddle, pointed, his face, too, lighting with his superstitious earnestness, " An omen, surely." Something in the voice led me to regard him closely for an instant. At this point a hedge bordered the road on the right, some scrub oaks covering

the long slope beyond. At the left marshy meadows, where the moisture gleamed back to the ray of the sunshine, sloped away to a little river, beyond which were low barren hills, occasionally studded with buildings. Beyond, and to our faces, were higher hills, with dark defiles, rising to loftier elevation, that, of a clear day, might be blue, but now was a misty outline. Almost before we saw battlemented towers,—probably surviving from the time when warriors arrayed themselves like modern armored cruisers. If I were right there remained fifteen miles of the way before the French lines could be expected, and every foot was through a country where a German army probably was. I could only conjecture,—as a chart lacks something of the slow brain of even a very stupid peasant. I despised a German soldier that day ; for I remembered French history,—my own grandfather's adventures with Napoleon, and I had belief in the star of the Emperor. Soon I was to see a splendidly disciplined

army scattered; too soon I was to know of the presence of a Prussian king at Versailles. But that afternoon I rode through a country which I despised because it was essentially German in temper.

The sun passed behind the black clouds. Moving drearily through the heavy tracks, Dumont's horse pricked its ears, when the rider, putting a finger to his lip, motioned to me, "Hist!"

And all at the instant I saw that something stirred behind the hedge. I first thought of the despatches in the leathern belt about my waist.

"You had better surrender, Mein Herr," cried the Bavarian leader in his language.

To put a wearied horse at a hedge is at the best a hazardous experiment, and in this case I did not know my animal. But it was a question of time to be rid of the belt of despatches. I turned the mare at the hedge, and, at the second, the riders swept down upon the place where we had stood,

carrying Dumont out of his seat. I saw him in the second suspended between the saddle and a puddle of muddy water. A horse catches something of the human spirit, and interprets quickly the mental tremor reaching unconsciously to the fingers' tips: as the riding-masters say often, no one may be a rider till the heart may be as erect as the head. Thinking neither of my bones nor the poor hack under me, but of the precious belt of despatches, and resolving that my captors should be none the wiser for the capture, I raised the horse with arm and spur high into the air. Yet the leap was too great for unaccustomed and now weary muscles; and while the animal's legs caught in the hedge and pawed wildly at air, I flew into space. Luckily I landed on a boggy spot, which gave under my weight, and, springing up, I ran for dear life. A bullet whistled past, then many sharp reports, but without the missiles being so unpleasantly near. Running on regardless of direction,

struggling with heavy boots over the uneven soil, I heard the pursuit at my heels. Making a despairing turn, I rushed into a thicket, tearing the face and one gloveless hand. With satisfaction I heard the rout taking the false trail. Beyond the leafy barrier was a glade. Turning into this refuge, the scabbard of the sword catching in a branch held me for an instant. As I detached the scabbard, a voice in German called out that I could not get away. Then I saw at my face a young Bavarian officer holding a levelled pistol. With death before, I dodged, fell on my face, scrambled to my feet, raised my sword in time to catch a blow from this unexpected assailant. Making several passes with the broad blade, I caught the man under his guard, yet, though I had passing skill at the fence, the other found me unguarded, and as I dodged, seeing at the moment my blade reach into his side, his was brought against my temple. Trees and glade, and the Bavarian clutching at

air,—all reeled the instant that my head seemed bursting, and then that appeared the space of a second, which was really of several hours. I was aware of faint chirpings, a burst of bird voices, the crackling of twigs, the rustling of branches, and a warm wind upon my face. These occupied a long space of time before my eyes opened upon a sky of fathomless view, framed by branches. The sun, I thought, must be setting; for this rim of branches was fringed with yellow, while a little space below the line of sharp separation between light and shadow the shade lay heavier. A bird swung for an instant against the blue background in the frame; perceptibly the yellow light lifted, the line of shadow pursuing. I raised myself on an elbow, but the muscles so remonstrated that I quickly fell again, to stare around toward the blue with its circlet. After a space, measured by the fading light, I again raised myself on an elbow, while the head began to throb; and I remem-

bered the stout blow which, in my passion, I had not warded. Then I caught a gleam of red vivid against the grass, which the long rainfall had rendered of a clear green. I must have stared at this bit of color for some moments before, with sickening sense, I saw that it was the red breeches of my assailant. For I never had killed a man then, and the motionless figure was fearful. Once I had broken the Comte Vervier's arm at Vincennes ; but, though I might have killed him, —and I had reason for my quarrel,—the Bavarian's red breeches seemed to declare me a Cain. Again, the arm yielded, till, with an acute nausea, I sank to the ground. You may declare that this was mawkish of a man who had had experience of arms at Saint-Cyr, and afterward in active service, yet I think a sense of the fearfulness of bloodshed need not detract from bravery. Perhaps, too, I had a presentiment. Bah ! I have indeed two natures : one after Voltaire ; another after the fashion of a penitent in the Confes-

sional. In the world I can be a scoffer, or merely gay ; or, out of it,—the polite world,—I may appreciate the fickleness and forwardness of our human temper, and I can feel as violent for a moral as ever Bossuet. As I lay upon the ground, recovering from the shock of the blow, the fact of my assailant lying there, dead from my thrust, threw me into the mood of consulting a priest, and I longed, with the loathing of the fact, of a weak nature, to have some one near to whom I might unburden myself. I thought of the mother (whom I shall never see !) who brought me up in some sense as an English boy, and it was English which I knew as a child. I saw her lying still and immovable to all of my cries in the implacable death which knew nothing of me. Suddenly I recollected the despatches ; yet feeling for the belt I found the papers safe. No one had followed my assailant. The hunters had abandoned their prey even when in the net. In delight at this discovery I leaped

to my feet. But, standing, I found myself tottering, and I caught at one of the trees. Something bright lay in the grass. Leaning forward I saw that it was a little flask of spirits. Unscrewing the stopper I took a long pull, and as the raw brandy went down the throat, like a draught of fire, I felt suddenly strength. I noted a monogram on the flask—"F. Von H." And who was "F. Von H."? Plainly the officer whose red breeches had caught the eye when I wakened. The glade between the trees now was falling into deeper shadow, and I almost thought that the man's legs gave a convulsive twitch. If I were mistaken, I at any rate knew the need of getting away from the place. Walking to a spot which seemed to lift above the trees, I found that indeed I must have had a shaking, and that I was lame in every muscle. But the despatches made me forgetful of self, as I neared the slope and saw beyond, the towers and battlements which Dumont and I had noted from

the road. Lights flickered from the place, which, whether in the hands of the German or the French, at least was the nearest goal, where perhaps I might dare to ask assistance. Stars pierced the darkening blue, and, shivering in the mists from the damp earth, I found that the projecting towers were farther than I had supposed. Every step showed that I had lain in the open, unconscious, longer than I had thought. Deer lifted their heads; a flock of sheep, scattered among the brown trunks, blinked out of the gathering shadows. For now it appeared that the darkness could be seen to rise from the ground. Picking a way carefully through the bushes, and seeing no one, I almost stepped from the edge of a precipice into a dark and broad pool, from which there began, ominously, the quick croaking of frogs. Will you believe me, an owl "too-whitted," while bats skimmed the surface of the water, as if everything had been arranged by a narrator of the actions of the black art. Nor am I sure that

there may not be a world of truth behind the curtain of legendary symbolism. Dark spots, like this point of the moat of the Château Grand Mal, with twitting owls and fluttering bats, may be merely physical pictures of metaphysical states and moral chaoses. That night, when I leaned in the gloaming at the edge of the moat of Grand Mal, I indeed was not prone to gloomy abstraction. As to every one seriousness is sooner or later, so it has appeared to me, and I, whose most grave thought was the fortune of the favorite at Longchamps, or of the Derby, or Ascot, or the frown or smile of Mademoiselle of the Variétés, or perhaps of the Odéon, now have had occasion to think seriously. A wry face often expresses simply a temper incompatible with circumstance—a distorted and wry soul. But the Sieur de Montaigne has reasoned on this topic more nimbly than I; so I will tell simply how I leaned on the edge of the moat of Grand Mal, noting the thick fringe of bushes of the opposite slope, beyond

which was the gray stone massive side of the Château. I did not suspect that I was near the place of which I had heard much the year before. The investigation of the silent stagnant pool, with its flitting bats and crying owls, could give no assurance of whether I might dare to ask for hospitality. Yet it was certainly in the interest of my mission that I should have food and a horse, or at least some knowledge of the way. I turned from the bushes that fringed the precipice at my feet, which I skirted in the opposite direction. The sky now reddened into an afterglow seeming to retard the swiftness of rising darkness. Stepping cautiously, I heard the quick clear stroke of a chapel bell, borne on the damp air as from a distance. Some one called in French a vigorous "Hello!" A few rods farther, pushing aside the bushes, I brought up on a gravel path, bordering a road, which led beyond to a bridge to the front of the Château; and there, before the flickering lights of the win-

dow beyond, was a Prussian sentry. Hardly had my eyes fallen on him before a troop galloped past my hiding-place, and, as I drew farther into my recess, I saw that their leader was in the uniform of a general, and that, erect in the saddle, he showed youthfulness belying a gray beard. Now I stepped back cautiously, for the thought of the mission and its importance to the Prince put me on the alert to escape the trap, and I forgot the muscles strained in the fall and stiffened by exposure to the damp during my unconsciousness. As I moved backward a heavy hand fell on the shoulder. "Mein Herr, you are a prisoner."

The after-glow lit the grizzled face of this Prussian sergeant, who appeared to have sprung from the earth. I started to push off the man, when two levelled bayonets emphasized his claim to surrender.

"Plainly, I am your prisoner," I said in German, which I speak fairly well.

"Herr Saint-Dernier," he said, turning

my name clumsily on his German tongue, "we have been looking for you. I suspect that on your capture depend the plans of General, the Graf Von Beyreuth."

For myself, I was in any rather than a laughing mood, but I suddenly recollected that weeping did not profit a relief even to the feeling, while I still held the precious despatches. Since resistance was useless, I followed my captor through a paved court, an outer hall, and into a smaller room, where, on the fire-dogs, I noticed a strangely familiar crest—that of a stag bearing an un-sheathed blade in its jaws. The flaring log displayed the same design on the wainscoting. While a tall grenadier stood by the door, I began to question how I had fallen into the trap plainly laid for me. (Yet the despatches were untouched.) But by some means the Bavarians, as well as these Prussians, had had the intention of arresting the Prince's messenger; and here I was at their mercy. Then the face (the evil lines on the face

rather) of the orderly, Dumont, seemed to solve the problem. I longed to have the fellow within reach to deal out to him his desert. Lame and mud-covered as I was, the thought of the man threw me into violent passion.

A spurred boot clanked in the corridor. The sentry threw back the door, admitting first a tall servant, an Alsatian, I thought, carrying a candle ; and behind strode another whose upright and military bearing I had admired when he had passed, at the head of the little troop of infantry, my hiding-place in the thicket. The servant put the candlestick upon a small table of carved oak. The General, Von Beyreuth—for it was he,—bowed in the manner of a soldier who preserves the evidences of gentle breeding, who can be as urbane as on occasion he may be severe.

“ Monsieur Saint-Dernier, I regret this detention, and that you are my prisoner,” he began, with an accent which would have pleased a Parisian of the Boulevards.

“Not so sincerely as I, Monsieur,” said I, thinking of the precious belt with which I believed I was shortly to be asked to part.

“Oh, Monsieur, it was the necessity of war that we should get the despatches—which we have read and acted upon.”

Now it was my time to display consternation and dismay; for certainly the belt was tight about the waist. Could they have read these while I was in my faint? And have returned them? This idea suggested itself; again, Dumont’s treachery; and again, that the orderly had made some clever substitution; for I thought of Gervaise Dumont’s face, with its untranslatable expression, as it had been some hours before while the horses lagged on. Or was the Prussian playing spider to my fly?

“It is the part of conqueror, perhaps, to indulge in sarcasm,” I managed to mutter between my teeth.

“Monsieur,” he went on, with grave disregard of my temper, “Mademoiselle Lou-

vois is my niece. Accident took me to this, her house, as it brought about your capture."

"Oh, Monsieur," I managed to say; for Mademoiselle Louvois recalled certain winter days on the Boulevard Saint-Germain, my aunt, and one of the most charming young girls. And I had stumbled upon this friendly Château. I stared at the Graf Von Beyreuth.

"Yes, Monsieur," he went on gravely. "You are a prisoner of war—and of your friends. For I knew your father—a brave man. Will you believe, then, that I regret that the chance of war has necessitated me depriving you of your papers?"

If I were bewildered—for the belt certainly, as I say, was about my waist—I trust I did not show this in unmannerly fashion; though after a time I put the question: "You doubtless caught my orderly?"

"A detachment of the Bavarians did that. He is an intelligent fellow."

“Dumont !” I gasped under my breath ; for now I believed only in the fellow’s duplicity. There were many spies ; and this man whom I had trusted ! Yet, how could he have known ? It might have been some person about the Prince.

Will you believe that first of all I thought of my mission ; and then of Claire Louvois, and the strange circumstance of being now in her house, her uncle’s prisoner ? If this is believed, much of what followed will be understood ; for it will be seen how dear I held my mission.

But when I once thought of the young lady I forgot all else. And I thanked the Graf for his hospitality to a prisoner ; for I was to dine with him and his niece. A careful watch was kept, however, while I made myself as presentable as possible for a weary and travel-stained and lame man. I could not forget for a moment that my detention was regarded as important ; for the Graf had said himself that a spoken word was as dan-

gerous as a written one. Yet shortly I was in the elysium that very young men conjure up in relation to some particular fair one. The meeting was strange ; but strange indeed was the whole adventure. Nor for a few days did I think so much of the message of the Prince as I did of Mademoiselle Louvois' eyes. I have noticed how the eyes which have a particular personal interest in a narrative may bore an outsider—and while these eyes never have bored me, I ought not to give them too prominent a place in the story of an adventure quite distinct. I saw, when the Graf's valet had made me somewhat more presentable, a young lady whom I had met last in Paris, and before, of a March day, near Havre.

For a few days I forgot my mission, and I am bound to say that the grizzled German warrior did not recall it ; but proved himself, under trying circumstance, as great an adept in courtesy as in military manœuvre ; the history of the events of those years de-

clare his cleverness ; and in the days at Grand Mal I came to understand certain traits of the Fatherland upon which a military culture has been put.

The second night, I think, when the sentinel was conducting me to my room,—the same man whose regular tread I heard at night before the door,—the second evening, I believe,—the sentinel and I met, nearly opposite my door, a little fair woman, hardly more than a girl, who seemed to trip and fall almost under my feet ; I leaned toward her, as did the sergeant. But this blonde person was on her feet before either of us could reach her. As she turned, her sharp gray eyes showing her chagrin, two words reached me, “Be watchful.” Noting her retreating figure, the tall sergeant tittered, “A pretty little woman, Mein Herr,—the housekeeper’s daughter,” and he threw open the door of my chamber. This was a small room panelled with mahogany. At one corner stood an old-time bedstead, and

between the windows was a carved oak dressing-case. Two chairs completed the furniture. The windows were barred by heavy iron shutters, fastened by padlocks, a precaution quite unnecessary, I thought, when I looked down a sheer descent of full fifty feet into a moat, where the moon, now high above the wooded horizon, lay reflected ; and far beyond was the dimmed outline of the mountains.

Too tired as I was to think of even the most important matters, yet the events of the day passed before in all their confusion. I still had the despatches, unless my treacherous orderly, or some spy about the Prince, had delivered their import to the enemy. I knew how important was the delivery of these despatches. So I sat there in the darkness thinking of the strangeness of the adventure, Claire Louvois' charming face, and the meaning of the little maid's " Be watchful." Yet to a man as weary as I that night, love and adventure may not suffice to

keep away sleep, till I thought I was on the parade, when my eyes opened on a sunny glare. Again came the sound, brisk and martial, of clarionet and fife. Rushing to the window, I noted first of all the wooded hills displayed in clear green under the sunshine, which just had fallen over the heights, and was reaching into the hollows. A dissolving mist masked the lowlands and the line of the river. The highway, losing itself beyond the slope, was crowded with marching men. I indeed must have stood an hour noting the soldiers who so soon were to hold all France ; and the shouts of the men to the horses tugging at the heavy artillery were borne to me through the shutters. What did this movement signify ? And how was the hindrance of my mission connected with it ? When my freedom might profit the Prince, here was I caged ; and the information, obtained I knew not how, probably had been acted upon.

But later when I was again with Claire

Louvois, the apprehension and despair of the prisoner fled. In my life I never had an experience quite as delightful as the one of that day when I was a prisoner in the forest fastness of Alsace. I afterwards thought, when I was in a religious mood, that this was given to encourage me at one time, to madden me at another. For the scene as I left her in the evening of the eventful day remained with me always: the young lady with her spirited face, the changing deep eyes, that now were light, again dark, showing their owner's charming, womanly spirit; Madame Fromant, her companion, regarding the cards,—for it was after bezique; Monsieur Abbé Fontaine's non-committal polite face, understanding us thoroughly, though of him I could not have told you a word; the tall Alsacian going mechanically about our wants; the black Italian hound, with its long muzzle in Mademoiselle's hand; the carving of the wainscoting, lit by the flickering candles; the portraits on the

walls, which in such a light appear to take on life and expression. Passing from this scene to a room forlornly chill and dark, for an instant I indeed was heartsick.

Leaning against the iron shutters, and looking into the black depth where the moat lay, the wind wailing and whining about the ancient stronghold, I had the illusion that I heard voices, faint, gasping, and frightful, the sinful past of the place. The events of the few days ; my man, Gervaise Dumont ; my detention ; Claire Louvois ; the girl stumbling before me in the corridor ;—these were all before me. Glancing about the dismal place, I blew out the candle. Then again I heard the man outside the door ; for, as I say, I never was permitted to forget that I was guarded closely. I raised myself on elbow, trying to penetrate the darkness, feeling to know if the belt of despatches certainly were safe, and thinking of the salon which I had left.

As after deep sleep, I seemed to have been

unconscious only a moment when I was shaken roughly, and strong arms held me down, like one in nightmare. A face showed vaguely in the grayish light reaching through the iron shutters, and more familiarly as with greater distinctness it bent farther toward me ; and, still struggling with sleep and striving to separate the real from the unreal, I heard a voice :

“ Hist, Monsieur, not a word.”

“ Gervaise ! ”

“ It is I, Monsieur,—I, Dumont. *Mon Dieu*; do not cry out. The walls have ears” ; while the pattering rain, taking up the whisper, absorbed it ; till awake, I struggled with the arms, forcing them back, and clutching the man by the shoulder, whose dark face and gleaming eyes shone in the gray light as once in the Palais Royale.

“ You have not betrayed me then ? ”

“ Not I ; some spy about the Prince. Hush, I beg of you.” I twitched his shoulder, muttering, “ I will save the executioner.”

“Indeed, I did not, Monsieur. Hush, I beg of you. Believe that I persuaded them that a decoy despatch was the true one. Do not ask more. We have only a second—a second.”

“You are intelligent”; for I was thinking of the Graf’s words.

“Do not even breathe.” Again there was the wind (which had been rising) between the rain-drops.

“Come, Monsieur ! Carefully ! Here are your clothes !”

I was sitting up, by this time in possession of the senses. In the dim morning, breaking vaguely through the blackness of the storm, I saw Gervaise Dumont, the orderly. His dark, earnest, and evil countenance showed the eagerness of his purpose. A draught of cold air swept my face, and I saw, on seeking the cause, that a piece of the wainscoting was swung open at the place between the windows where the dressing-case had stood. I understood that Dumont in some way—

with his peculiar cleverness—had happened on this old passage, perhaps now forgotten, dating from the time when secret exits were important to the economy of Grand Mal. Should I trust him again? And was he leading me to the fulfilment of my mission? Or to some cunning device to put me out of the way of being troublous to him as a spy?

“It may be now that I do not care to avail myself of the chance. Besides, Gervaise, it is too late.”

Standing there, like a Mephistopheles, he hissed back, while the wind whistled outside: “Monsieur, believe me. My life is not worth that,” and he snapped a thumb against a forefinger. “Not worth that if they catch me here. Have I ever proven unfaithful? Have I not been of service in many ways, as indeed I ought? Come. Quick, or——”

And then it was, while this unexpected claimant of my duty talked, that I thought of the yesterday; and that he divined my thought.

“ Oh, I know, Monsieur ; a woman before the message of the Prince.” And I caught him, as he stood there, shaking him, while he, out of fear, uttered not a word.

“ Fellow ; rascal ! ” And then, gasping, he said, his words like blows physically forcible :

“ I am striving with you against yourself. Shall it be said that a woman’s eyes made Monsieur Saint-Dernier weak, forgetful of duty ? ”

And then my hands fell nervelessly from their grasp.

“ You are not on parole ; and what indeed would a parole be to the importance of such a matter ? ”

“ Does it indeed matter now to him ?—to the Prince ? ”

He moved forward with the motion of a cat, his hissing voice close to my ear.

“ That indeed it does. Have I not told you that the false despatch was on the wrong track ? Monsieur, our escape is of importance. I beg of you not to delay.”

Now indeed I understood. Here perhaps was the chance to carry out my mission. I could only conjecture upon the means adopted by Dumont, who seemed in that darkish dawn like some evil spirit. If this were only a chance, must I not embrace it? Yes, I must make the most of my chances; and duty transcends love. If the clever rascal were leading me into some trap?

“I will kill you.”

“Ah, you may, Monsieur,” he answered, moving now indeed like a cat toward the opening in the wainscoting. A black spot against this dark aperture, he motioned to me to follow. The whole matter had not taken many minutes, and now, with duty beckoning,—a devil’s shadow, I fancied, calling from happiness,—I was in my clothes.

“Hist, Monsieur.” Again the step sounded in the corridor. Listening, and as quietly as I could, I followed Gervaise to the opening. A chair moved in the corridor, or so I thought.

“Your guard is wakening! No time, Monsieur!”

With the word he pulled me through the opening, and down a step; and then, reaching forward, he caught at something which drew the wainscoting together with a sharp metallic click. A match was struck, and, lighting the candle, Gervaise showed me that we were at the summit of narrow stone steps; and at the instant the fellow's intelligent, wicked face was declared in that dark passage.

“How did you contrive this?”

He laughed softly. “Through the vanity of a young woman, Madame Bourgot's, the housekeeper's daughter. I can twist a woman. But come!”

Yet, turning as we descended, he whispered again: “Indeed all is contrived,—even horses are waiting. Do I not know how to deal with women?”

The steps, worn, and of irregular length, showing their great antiquity, went down

much below the level of the moat, and, I thought probably through the thick body of the ancient wall. Nearing the bottom, water ran in places across the stone, moss and slime hung against the sides, and I shivered with the damp. At the lowest step a wall stopped the way. Gervaise turned abruptly to the right, leaning forward through the low opening at the farther passage.

"It will be higher directly," he said, while, as he turned, the candle lit his face grotesquely. My foot struck a soft object ; and, as its eyes glared, a little snake wriggled away. Directly the passage was higher. Water dripped and oozed through the irregular ceiling. With an irresistible tendency to chattering teeth, I drew the coat closer.

"We are under the moat," said Gervaise again ; and I easily believed him. Wherever he was leading, I was following duty.

"A step, Monsieur !" Now Gervaise's figure was above and beyond. Suddenly it paused, and bent forward with ear against

the wall. A low, quick knock reached me.

“Mademoiselle Louise !” Again, “Mademoiselle Louise !” A woman’s voice, the inflection that once had warned me with “Be watchful,” answered :

“It is safe, Monsieur Gervaise.”

Instantly a door seemed to open ; the little fair woman who had stumbled before me in the corridor at Grand Mal stood in the centre of what appeared to be a cellar piled with rubbish. A wooden ladder led to a trap, which was opened a crack.

“The horses are ready ;—you know the place ?”

An uncertain voice reached us from above.

“There are people all about in the park. Tell them to be careful, Louise !”

For answer Gervaise Dumont ascended the ladder.

“Wait, Monsieur,” he whispered, blowing out the candle. As the trap closed behind,

only a thread of white light entered, vaguely showing me Louise Bourgot.

"Ah, Monsieur, it was a fearful risk—a fearful risk. How did I dare?"

"You tried to let me know?"

"I tried to let you know that he would come,—to prepare you. Oh, Monsieur, I love him; and, when the war shall be over, he will come to marry me. I am risking everything."

The men's steps sounded overhead.

"It is old Alphonse, the forester," she said. "You are in his cellar. You see his son, Philippe, is in love with me. Philippe, who is a soldier—Alphonse is too old for that,—showed me the passage when we were children. The stupid Prussians did not suspect it once."

I heard her low sobs.

"Well?"

"Monsieur, Alphonse loves his son, as I—as I do your gallant. I went to him and told him, as Gervaise told me,—that I should marry Gervaise Dumont unless he should aid

me in getting him away. Then old Alphonse was in a rage.

“ ‘You ’re a hussy !’ said he.

“ ‘And a Frenchwoman !’ said I.

“ ‘Is it for France ?’ said he.

“ ‘Alphonse,’ said I, ‘for Philippe’s sake, and for France, we must help Monsieur to escape. If not——’

“ ‘If not ?’

“ ‘I shall marry that——’

“ ‘That ugly-faced rascal,’ said he, meaning Gervaise. ‘Yet I care not for that, Mademoiselle. That would be better for Philippe. There are enough girls——’

“ ‘So there may be,’ said I.

“ ‘Ah, you pretty doll, and dollish fool,’ said he (I could take so much from a dotard, Monsieur) ; ‘I care not for you ; but if I am too old to fight for France, I certainly may do this much.’ ”

Her chatter had a strain of hysteria, which, though subdued, occasionally escaped her restraint.

“Oh, I cannot let him go—I cannot, Monsieur.”

And, as she muttered, the trap opened.

“You may come above,” said Gervaise’s voice.

We climbed to a small, bare room, like those in peasant cottages of the better class in that province. Glancing through the small-paned windows, I saw in the mist and the scurrying rain the trees bending, and the outline of the northern tower of Grand Mal. I thought that we were in the park, at the side from which I had approached the Château. Gervaise was leaning out of the window on this side. By the single door of the room was an old man in a frayed shooting-coat. Once he must have been powerful; and now, bent and shrivelled as he was, his head almost touched the ceiling of the little room. He doffed his hat as I stepped from the ladder.

“My lord, every part of the forest seems

to be filled with soldiers and people. How is it, Monsieur Dumont ? ”

Dumont turned his head, until I saw his face more distinctly than before. Again its keen craftiness startled me.

“ We will wait a few minutes, a—— ” and he closed the shutter. Louise Bourgot was facing the others ; and I saw her comely face showing traces of tears in a redness of the eyelids.

“ You will come back, as you promised ? ” I heard her say.

“ It may be, Mademoiselle Louise ; it may be. ” He ended with a low whistle.

She drew toward him, like a hound which fawns under a master’s blows.

“ It must be, ” she said ; “ after all I have risked for you. Yes, it must be. ”

Gervaise shrugged his shoulders.

“ What must be, must be ! *Peste*, Mademoiselle, I must get away, or my head is in a noose ! ”

“ Or a musket-ball is in your heart, if I

should wish. *It might be*;—yes, it might be.”

“*Mon Dieu!*” said Gervaise, “of course I will keep my part of the contract. But this bores Monsieur.”

The old man, in the meanwhile, had been watching the two. He smiled grotesquely, and again trembled, for his nervousness and irresolution were displayed in every line of the figure.

“I—we, Louise there,—are risking a great deal for you and for France.”

“I certainly will remember, my friend.”

“If I only could see Philippe returning from the war—from Berlin perhaps, I should not care,” he muttered, rubbing his wrinkled, bony hands together.

“You do not all together risk as much as I, who have been posing as a spy; cold lead for me,” said Gervaise, striding like some wild creature. Then, with the tenderness of her sex toward a loved one, the little, fair woman, hardly more than a girl, moaned:

“You must escape—you must. Oh, forgive me, Monsieur Gervaise ! ”

Not regarding her, his hand suddenly was on my shoulder.

“Monsieur, the risk must be taken ; we will go out of the window.”

Louise Bourgot threw her arms about Gervaise's neck with a wild cry : “ They are here, oh, Monsieur Gervaise ! ”

I saw him fling her away from him, as suddenly a head projected through the open trap ; then another ; and the door was thrown back, and against the green was the red of the Prussian infantry uniform, while at the instant two heads reached up from the open trap. I saw the Alsatian girl shrinking in the corner ; the forester's startled face ; Gervaise edging towards the farther window ; the gray-bearded and weather-colored face of the Graf ; the bare walls of the room. The scene in that second was fixed as on a camera through the drop of an instantaneous shutter. Then a new figure was projected on the

plate, and in my ears was the wind and the galloping of a horse, and at the Graf's shoulder was Claire Louvois, a flushed face displaying her excitement.

"The message of the Prince," muttered Dumont.

And, speaking, his arm raised under my shoulder; a flash; the Graf tottering over; a report; and Mademoiselle's scream as she leaned toward her uncle.

"The message, Monsieur," and he pulled me with him. I was like a man in a frightful trance; the scene with the attitudes of figures changed about shone on my mind, like one of those *tableaux* with which the acts may end in melodramas. It was a matter of a second from the first interruption to the catastrophe. In that second I saw the two pictures: the startled attitudes and expressions of all in the room; the soldiers springing forward, some toward us, others toward the Graf; but chiefly it was Claire's agonized face. Even in the trance I was horror-

struck. How that horror oppressed me in the long hours and days that were to follow ! Yet for all the horror, taking advantage of the confusion, with Gervaise's muttered "The Prince" in my ears, I leaped with him through the window, the memory of that scene following. As we went wildly over the uneven ground, shots and wild hello pursuing, Gervaise leading, the storm beating about, I felt the sickness of heart and will which almost is the worst. During the whole morning I had been like some automaton, nor yet had I wakened.

The events following the leap from the window of the forester's cottage are a confused blur : the violent wind and scurrying rain ; rapid voices and shots ; of a sudden detour to the right and then to the left at the heels of my quondam orderly ; of Claire Louvois' face ; and then we had plunged into a thicket, beyond which the pursuit bore. As it lessened in the distance, beating the bushes, but, by some miracle,

overlooking our hiding-place, Gervaise performed a manœuvre worthy a general.

"Is it still, Monsieur?" he whispered, as if not trusting his own senses.

"We must risk it," he whispered again. "We never can get away without hiding. It is a great risk, but a greater one to keep on."

As I followed cautiously toward the for-ester's house, through the bushes and undergrowth, now into a grassy glade between the high trees, where at any instant we might be observed, he turned to me again over his shoulder. "It will be a miracle if we are not caught."

"A devil's miracle," cried I.

"Not so loud. Hist!" For he had been turning back to the house on the theory that the place would be abandoned and that this would be the last spot where we should be sought; and indeed the sequel sustained the daring theory. The bushes ran almost up to a little back window. Trying this, Gervaise turned about.

“*Mon Dieu*, it is closed,” he said. “Who may be in there?”

As he spoke came the sound of wheels. It was I, who leaping back from the window threw myself on my face in the long weeds, and he followed this time.

“Lie close,” I said; and our position having now changed quite, he nodded. From my place in the tall grass I could see a turn in the road, about which an ambulance drew; as it passed, the fearful possibility sickened me; and there followed a rage at Gervaise, whose shoulder I twisted.

“Look you, fool, you devil’s fool!”

“Monsieur, you will crush the flesh,” he whispered with shrill distinctness. But I only held him tighter, and I felt my own panting gasps.

“You understand the meaning of that, you understand.” My hands held his throat, and we rolled over together, now he under, again I above. In that silent wrestle, though he was a wiry man, I soon had

the better. His face was black from my grasp.

“ I will kill you, kill you, you wretch ! ”

The evil lines of his face were marked distinctly, and I saw into a craven soul, though he never was physically a coward. I do not know what had possessed me at first, but suddenly I thought that I was soiling myself with this method of punishment. For an instant he gasped ; the natural color returned to his black face.

“ You will kill me ? ”

“ I might have committed a crime because of yours,” I said, disregarding him. “ But now you shall live. If we escape you shall have the price, the glory, of it. But I shall wash my hands of you.

Suddenly, his black evil eyes gleaming, his face wet with rain and stained with mud, he raised himself.

“ What a risk ? ”

And I answered, leaping up boldly, “ At least now that you have done so much for it,

I will do the utmost to carry out the plan. I have lost all through you ; but now certainly the message shall be delivered if our efforts count."

Accepting his manœuvre, and noting now, with senses alert, that our strange wrestle while fleeing for our lives had not been observed—to all appearances at least,—I stole toward the open window through which we had leaped a half hour since. The storm still was at its height ; not a living creature seemed to be stirring, and looking through the opened window there appeared to be nobody within. Leaping in, Gervaise after, I pulled the shutters together.

"The cellar is the place to wait until the darkness," I said, moving toward the trap.

"What was that?" questioned Gervaise on tiptoe. The noise of cantering horses answered the question.

"If——" he began, trembling, for his hand was pushed against my shoulder. But the horses bore away.

“*Ciel*,” he cried again, as he stumbled over something near the opened trap. I, too, was startled, for a mass of something—a woman—sprang up almost from under Gervaise’s feet.

“You are not ghosts? You are alive?”

I heard her kisses on Gervaise’s face.

“Heaven has kept you here for us, Mademoiselle Louise,” he said.

“Oh, Monsieur Gervaise, Monsieur Gervaise! But quick, into the cellar!”

We three crept down the ladder into the cellar below.

“I am glad that you are here,” began Louise, with trembling voice, “if no one has seen you! Oh, why did I ever undertake it?”

“Would that you never had,” I muttered.

“But I did it for him, Monsieur, for your Gervaise Dumont. Yet,—I ought to have died. I longed to be dead when I saw it happen, when Monsieur the General fell, and you escaped, and they all rushed about,

and our dear lady lay there still, only for her weeping. It was awful!" she moaned.

"But the General?" I asked, while my question echoed hollowly throughout my whole being.

"God forgive us!" she answered, dropping her eyes.

"God indeed pity me," I muttered, for it was of Claire Louvois I thought.

"When they took him away, they carried old Alphonse a prisoner. They had no time to think of me then; and I was left here alone, thinking that you might be dead, that all of the sorrow had been made for nothing. Yet you are here."

"Don't be foolish, girl," I heard Gervaise say.

"Foolish, foolish? After all I have done? Oh, what is left now? I will pray to the Virgin."

"Yes, I meant foolish, exactly. Oh, do not take on," continued Gervaise Dumont. "You surely do not wish us to be caught.

Get us a horse and a guide to start after nightfall—the same plan, only postponed. Yet I do not know what we may do for a guide?”

“And you are going? What may I have left? What,—but you must be saved,” she ended with sudden, almost savage, energy. “My little brother Claude (I can do anything with him, Monsieur Gervaise) can steal the horses. I will see him; only do you stay still.”

I lost her voice here, for she whispered low to Dumont. Then, mounting the ladder, she closed the trap softly. We heard her moving above, and again the trap opened.

“Monsieur Gervaise?”

“Yes, little one.”

“Here is bread and wine from Alphonse’s larder. You must not starve.”

Gervaise took the things from her at the top of the ladder. As he turned to descend, she leaned toward him.

“ Monsieur Gervaise ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ I have risked much for you.”

“ Thank you, little one.”

“ Only that,—only thanks ! I will——”

But she paused. “ Yet I will save your life if you will swear that, the war over, you will come again to Grand Mal.”

“ Of course, I swear it.”

“ Yet what does that mean ? ” I saw her sad face ; very different from what it had been when she had stumbled before me in the corridor of the Château ; it was as if the wrinkles of the future were hastening to force a claim to a fresh complexion.

“ I do not believe your oaths ; yet I will save you,” she said.

The trap closed again, and we heard her no more.

“ Oaths are easy, Monsieur,” said Gervaise, munching the bread.

“ It only becomes a devil to speak so of a woman who risks everything.”

“It may become Monsieur to belittle a faithful service.”

“Do not talk to me. You are unendurable enough. Remember that I have not killed you.”

“Monsieur, I remember a certain morning in the Palais Royale when you saved me from despair,—and,—and, oh,—I am still your servant.”

“What despair can possess a soul like yours?”

“Ah, you do not know human nature,” he cried bitterly. “You do not know how one is forced from good to evil, till the evil rules. I am talking like a priest.”

“Gervaise,” I said in answer, “I do not know of the struggles which have made you what you are ; but I know now that you are a wicked, despicable scoundrel.”

But as he did not answer, silence again possessed the place. At one side I noted the dark opening of the passage through which we had come.

“How did it happen that you had the decoy despatch?” I questioned suddenly.

“Because I anticipated that we might be captured ; because——”

“And the paper and the seal of the Prince?”

“There are spies, Monsieur, that you do not dream of.”

“And you are one?”

“I was one,” he assented gravely. “I do not hesitate to tell, because this service may pardon me.”

“Rascal, I have again a mind to shoot you. Why did you let me be betrayed?”

“That I could not avoid.” After a pause he began again : “Monsieur, I like you as I like no man. Will you believe that I have served you like a dog? May that pardon me? My profession, before I knew you even, was that of the secret service. Monsieur, may I be pardoned?”

I was walking up and down the uneven floor.

“It shall be judged whether your service merits that. But——” I saw suddenly how important it was to keep his good-nature for the delivery of the message of the Prince. “Gervaise,” I ended, “you may have risked much for me and my message. Your zeal has cost me my happiness probably—has indeed made me accessory to a crime. Yet I cannot forget how much you have risked.”

“Monsieur,” he said, seeing an advantage, “I never have known you to violate your word.”

As we waited in that dismal cellar, he seemed to me like some baleful spirit of which I longed to be rid, yet could not. For he was necessary to the fulfilment of the duty for which I had given so much. I think we said no more ; but his presence, hateful, dreadful, was louder than words. Once we heard some one enter the house, walk about ; and then again only the pattering rain, which, too, stopped. So hour after

hour passed. If the damp of the place chilled, the man haunted me like a personification of remorse. At last the trap opened, and Louise Bourgot, of whose reappearance I had despaired, called :

“Come up, if you are there.”

The room upon which the trap opened now was quite as dark as the cellar below. I saw through the window a star, and the wind had gone with the storm.

“It has been hard to do it. But Claude now is waiting with the horses. It may be, indeed, that I am watched.” She moved before, out of the cottage into the stillness of the park. First we struck the muddy ruts of the road, and thence a narrow lane.

“Claude?”

“Yes, Louise.”

We saw some one standing by two horses.

“My Lord,” he said, coming toward me, a little jaunty, servitor style of boy, “my Lord, I am willing to guide you ; but in return I must ask a reward of you.”

“Money, or anything.”

“I only wish your word,” he said; “that you will take me into your service,—an easy matter certainly. I may not dare to return to Grand Mal again, whatever the result may be.”

“A lad brave enough to guide two fugitives over the dangerous roads need not ask a second time,” I declared, for I liked something of daring in his tone.

“Farewell, farewell,” I heard Louise Bourgot’s sad voice.

“Ah, only *au revoir*, Mademoiselle,” said Gervaise.

“But where is your horse, my boy?” I asked the little fellow.

He laughed and courtesied. “I shall run easily by your side,” he said.

“Claude,” said the girl, and her voice was stifled with sobs, “you are going too?”

“Into the great world, Louise, with My Lord Vicomte,—the great world”; and I almost felt the warmth of the peasant’s enthusiasm.

“Monsieur Gervaise, I have done a great deal for you—for you.”

But it was I who took her hand.

“I, at least, shall not forget your service.”

“Hurry, my Lord,—Monsieur Gervaise! Careful, Claude!”

We left her in the narrow lane up which the boy led.

“This is the most dangerous of the way; but I know the by-paths.”

“What is the time?”

“About eleven.”

After plodding up a long hill, he stopped, pointing toward a lighting horizon.

“The moon, and the Château,” he said.

There against the sky were the towers of Grand Mal, which had seen so much happen in the past, and so much, too, in my life.

“Farewell to Grand Mal,” muttered the boy, “and welcome to the world.”

“It is a sad enough place,” I muttered.

“But I want it, sadness and all,” he cried.

Following those sodden paths, Gervaise said little ; nor indeed did I care to hear from him, and shrank from him, who, evilly, had induced me to follow duty at the cost of self-respect and love. As our horses went on heavily, I was not sure that it would not have been better to have surrendered, to have shown at least innocence of the intent of the crime. The clouds now hid the moon ; again it was swimming in a bluish abyss, with the blackness all about. Yet I kept repeating to strengthen myself ;—because one has fallen into fault, is this reason for the commission of another ? Certainly the message of the Prince should be fulfilled.

Occasionally a distant light glimmered ; then we might pass a solitary wayfarer ; but for a long time we followed the way in comparative silence.

The boy's hand pressed my arm, for he had caught the sound of wheels moving heavily ; and a lantern gleamed about a turn. A man went before swinging the

light ; a boy urged the laboring horses. Without a single curious glance toward us, these were gone. Finally the darkness began to lift, and to be lost in grayness ; the moon was fading ; presently the hills flushed in outline, clearing against the sky. We were by a river, whence a fog was rising. A lark's cry, carried over the slopes, impressing me wearily ; time passing, so intense was my preoccupation, with extraordinary swiftness. Presently the day was declared ; the low vineyard-clad hills ; a stirring of women and old men, for others were in the armies ; and over that scene the sunrise lay. The mists appeared to reach upward from the lowlands, as if drawn by the sun, and presently we were in thick, almost impenetrable fog.

“ You are nearly there,” said the boy, still plodding on, as if his muscles were of iron. “ We have wonderful luck.”

Gervaise yawned. “ *Ciel*, it is damp,” he muttered.

I, on my part, was wondering what lay behind that thick veil. A sudden challenge rang out. It was in French, and I knew that we were at our mission's end ; and that, whatever may have happened within the last three days, I again was within French lines,—that my message had been fulfilled.

“Monsieur Saint-Dernier must see the General at this early hour?”

“Yes, it is necessary.”

A few moments later I was in the General's quarters. My man, Dumont, I left outside.

Carefully I went over with the Prince's plan, detail by detail, as I knew it. Something on the old man's face appalled me.

“Yes, it is a stroke of genius ! But it is too late—too late. Ah, Monsieur, you are ill—you are ashen pale. It has been a hard ride ; you deserve the greatest praise.”

“Not I,” I said, pushing back the door. “It is this fellow who should gain the reward.” And I pointed to my orderly, Gervaise Dumont.

And then the room swam ; for the second time in that week I yielded to a faintness, and, the message fulfilled, lost consciousness.

The fever, they said, must have been in the system for months ; but I knew that the single day had been the provoking cause, or Herr Von Hohenstein's blow in the forest near Grand Mal may have had physical after-effect.

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So my imprisonment at Grand Mal ended. Excepting for the once, when I followed Gervaise Dumont, I do not know that I have been lacking in the will to act for myself, and now I think, the body being close with the brain (and I have believed it sometimes to be the all), that the fever had the mind subjugating and controlling. We never are twice alike, they tell us ; no two moods are perfect counterparts ; surely I never was nor have been as on the day of the escape from Grand Mal. This was not peculiar, because

of my wish to carry out the message of the Prince; yet now I know, while I never would have yielded any reasonable chance of carrying my mission to fulfilment, I again would not risk happiness. When I lay tossing with the fever, when the message had been delivered, and after I had found that this privation, like so much else, was vain, I saw clearly only the one course: to return to Grand Mal and to see Mademoiselle Louvois—of little avail though this might be,—that she might know that at least I was not unfeeling; then indeed I should have done all one may do after a mistaken act. This purpose had been before me during the ride from Grand Mal; but that night, with delirious images trooping through the disorder of the brain, it took the shape of resolve, which I put into form. In the delirium, I think this purpose alone was like sanity. I fancied Dumont, with a human mask which, with a leer, he doffed, showing the countenance of Mephistopheles, a tempter

with whom we go arm and arm, not once suspecting our comrade to be Sin till some crime, when the evil of the face penetrates the mask ; and again, this was Mademoiselle Louvois, sweet, reproachful, on an inaccessible peak, toward which I toiled, slipping, with every step lost the length of the one taken ; or it might be the Graf, turning an imploring face to mine, while I relentlessly thrust a knife into his bosom, or shot him down. At last I fell into feverish, disturbed slumber ; or I was awake, with the resolution to throw aside this disorder of brain, this feverishness of the blood, and to act ; or it might be—the conceit carried on—I was in camp, or the skirmish, with active flitting figures surrounding,—the scent of powder, the roar of cannon.

Finally, the phantasmagoria and the fever passed ; after many days, during which were skirmishes and battles, Gravelotte and Sedan, and the inevitableness of the Prussian triumph. Long before I was myself again, the Prince,

unaided, had been forced to surrender ; and the cleverness and knowledge which, acted upon, might have proven not without important, valuable result, unsustained, could act no longer for France. I myself, in that improvised hospital at the inn of the village, where I was, passed from the possession of French to that of the Prussians, and again to the French. Those with me when I had succumbed to the illness (which had been advancing upon me probably for weeks) were scattered ; my little escort, the sturdy lad from Grand Mal, had been killed in the skirmishes, they told me ; nor did I see or find trace of the man, Gervaise Dumont. Once again, by the strangest coincidence, was I to have recalled the face which haunted me as if it were that of some demon—a disturbed image on a fevered brain. When I was strong enough, the Sister of the Red Cross, whose kindly, patient face had become as familiar as the figures of the paper on the walls, the square panes of the win-

dows, brought pen and ink, and then, with clear brain, I wrote to the woman I loved, and whom I had lost.

Long after, with the army of the Loire, Felix Latoon (Captain Latoon, of the Husars) was riding with me, as I remember, when the answer was brought. I trembled in my stirrups when I saw the hand, and, while the bullets whizzed about, I broke the seal. Very formally the little note ran :

“I do not know the justification of your shot at my uncle. But I am happy to tell you that it was not a serious wound ; and yesterday I had a letter from him at Versailles, where he has been with the Emperor Wilhelm. I do not——”

I caught my breath in thick gasps.

“What is the matter, man?” cried the gay little Felix Latoon.

“The best news in the world—the very best indeed.” The whizzing bullets suddenly stopped, for the skirmish was bearing away.

“To read a letter at such a time, I should say so,” said the Comte de Latoon. “A woman probably, a——”

But he was galloping. A half hour later I was studying the letter where I had stopped.

“I do not doubt,” it ran further, “all that you say—to doubt would indeed be cruel. But I think I understand you; the things we said at Grand Mal together were ill-timed, and without consideration. Nor do I think, Monsieur Saint-Dernier, that any occasion can call for further letters or communication.”

So it ended, leaving me, since the Graf von Beyreuth was not dead, with a lighter heart; and I thought that Mademoiselle Louvois' condemnation was only just.

Then we were about the Loire, and I was proving myself not unworthy altogether of the military reputation which my family had gained. For my cousin, the Bishop of Monaco, took occasion to congratulate me on

being more Frenchman than Bonapartist. Others have censured me for this very thing ; they are those who would have a man a partisan, however he may hold his opinion. I think differently—that in politics, as in ordinary matters, one should follow his own judgment, rather than an inefficient or opinionated or knavish leader to error. As you know, I have no endurance of this republic and its gods ; but I do not lose my patriotism nor loyalty to France on that account. And the Prince Imperial has perished in Zululand ! Antoine, my cousin, the Bishop of Monaco, knows the world, and he was right—that a course of action, dictated by the best and most honest judgment one may possess, is a finer light than any other.

Shortly, that night, Felix Latoon and I were again together.

“ You were right,” I said, as he rolled a cigarette, “ the letter was from a woman.”

“ Ah, I knew it,” he began.

“ Stop,” I said, “ that is over.”

And we heard the chatter of some sutlers not far away. The message of the Prince had been of no avail, had ruined my happiness. No, I was wrong. It was Gervaise Dumont ; and again the fellow's keen, eager face was before me.

" *Mon Dieu*, this tobacco !" said Captain Latoon, throwing aside an ineffectual cigarette.

So the matter paused ; yet with consequences. When the affair of '70 came to be in retrospect, somebody told of the idea of the Prince, and all saw the clear head and fair judgment. Of course, then, was dispute, and particulars. At a dinner in Florence the Prince himself told the story ; and he mentioned the officer of his staff who had volunteered to carry the message of particulars. So one day I came to Paris, where now some sort of a government had followed the disorder, to find myself rather of a celebrity, apart from any connection which I had had later with the army of the Loire.

I hate nothing more than the tongue of gossip,—nor indeed does anything more distort the truth than a certain publicity ; yet in this I found, as you shall see, a recompense ; and indeed whatever the Prince, one of the noblest of his time, ever may have done for me, has rebounded in the end to my profit.

Now, it chanced one afternoon I had stopped at the Café Américain, where I saw the same Chantillon who had been my comrade in many of the escapades of earlier youth ; sitting there we went over with our acquaintances, one by one ; and he it was who told me between puffs of smoke that de Montban was to marry.

Then a dapper fellow questioned ; I, not thinking that this mattered greatly to me, till Chantillon said :

“ To Mademoiselle Louvois.”

And instantly I was strangely agitated. Leaving the place, I walked into the crowd, where, calling a *fiacre*, I went to the Hotel Saint-Dernier. Yet, argue as I would, this

indeed only was a just desert for that which I had done.

Now, shortly after, I was on the terrace at Saint-Germain-en-Laye, where I was waiting for the train; and beneath was the prospect of village and plain, and, farther, the smoke above Paris. Suddenly I saw a lady walking by the railing, while, a short distance beyond, a groom led two horses. Two years had passed since I had seen her; but, rising clumsily, I bowed to Mademoiselle Claire Louvois. There was a faint touch of color on her fair skin as she recognized me.

“Mademoiselle,” I said, bowing as best I could, and thinking in how sad a plight I had left her,—“a poor servant of yours.”

“Is it indeed you, Monsieur Saint-Dernier?” said she, half turning away; and, with the sweet consideration which always had been hers, she extended a hand gravely.

“I indeed am glad to see you.” And then she drew her hand from me, and called

to the groom. But I quickly had myself under control, and, turning, I asked whether I might not have a chance of seeing her again.

“I value your opinion, even if you scorn me. If I lose it, as I have lost its grace, indeed nothing is left.”

Again she turned, her frank eyes scrutinizing.

“It is I who have wronged you. It is I, —who must ask forgiveness, Monsieur Saint-Dernier. I have heard your distinction as it was put in the journals; and I understood what was written there. I understand now that,—that time at Grand-Mal!”

And I, noting how beautiful she was, only could say, bowing again:

“Ah, I thank you!”

Now the color was gone from her face; but she extended her hand gravely again.

“Good-bye, Monsieur Saint-Dernier.”

I attempted to say something further, but she was gone, a lithe figure against the sky. Nor did I try to follow.

How long I sat there, I know not ; nor do I remember how I came to the Hotel Saint-Dernier on the Avenue de l'Alma. Suddenly, with the longing to see her again, I called to me Pierre, who once was coachman, but who now was my factotum.

“ Do you know the Hotel Louvois on the Boulevard Saint-Germain ? ”

“ Indeed, I do, Monsieur. ”

“ Inquire if there may be a Mademoiselle Louvois there ? ”

Shortly he came and told me that she would be there on the morrow with Madame de Bernard, her aunt. For, while chance had done its part toward bringing about the meeting, now the part of action was with me. Waiting I saw all the details of Madame de Bernard's salon on the Boulevard Saint-Germain. The distant corners were in the shadow, out of which Mademoiselle Louvois came, as if this had been the salon at Grand-Mal.

Now that which was said and done then,

I cannot tell you at all. I only remember that she said that she had thought I cared more for my message than for her. Of this, as you may believe, I soon dissuaded her.

Partly I owed the great good-fortune to the dinner at Florence, when the Prince told how an officer of his staff acted as best he could to deliver the message. Madame de Bernard understood us ; but of the Graf I despaired ; and to this day, though I, at least recently, never have done anything savoring of dishonor, I believe that he regards me with suspicion ; or he may condone the fault by stating that I am a Parisian. But the episode seems to prove to me at least that the end one wishes for devoutly,—if he brings all of his faculties to bear on the wish,—he may attain at last. At least this is the version that Antoine, my cousin the Bishop, puts upon the matter.

“There be good and evil forces at work,—and the Devil is mighty,” he said, when I told him of Gervaise Dumont ; and he

crossed himself as one who would exorcise a demon.

Very curiously this was recalled to me ; and, lately, I have begun to believe my cousin. While religion is a matter of feeling more than of reason, I believe in a higher reason than that which may be formulated in strict demonstration ; nor did Claire Louvois and I arrive at our understanding because we reasoned about it.

Shall I say that I felt as if the good principle had triumphed ; and Gervaise Dumont leading on to the fulfilment of the message of the Prince, by whatever means, seemed to signify the blackness of despair ; for the adventure with Dumont had darkened my life. Nor was it without a shudder that I heard Pierre Renne's curious story long after.

Now, Pierre Renne is a Parisian of his peculiar class ; a lover of pleasure, the boulevards, the *Café Chantant*, despising the country, and adoring *la belle Paris*. He has been for me always a source of sur-

prise, as he rolls his eyes over an unexpected piece of news. One of his peculiarities is that of letting his tongue run apace, and oftener faster than his thoughts. My household always are laughing at him, and yet I like the fellow. The day in question, I noticed his uncommon pallor, and the uncertainty declared by his eyes.

“Well, what is it? the grooms? news from the country? the dogs?”——

“Neither one nor the other, Monsieur. I have seen a ghost.”

“A ghost, man? We all see ghosts sooner or later—our past, our follies.”

“Spare the *jeu d'esprit*, Monsieur. I have seen——” and his voice sank to a whisper, “Gervaise Dumont.”

I believe I turned on him. “Gervaise Dumont?”

“Yes, I have seen him,—at his end, his horrible end. Do you hear, Monsieur?”

“Go on. I am listening.”

“I had been, Monsieur, to see my brother

in the Quartier Latin, and, as I came along the Cite, I thought suddenly to look in at the Morgue. (I have stopped there often, Monsieur, noting the poor devils, who, indeed, are probably now devils of the bottomless pit.) So it was not strange that I should push my way through the crowd—that is always there, Monsieur,—and there—I swear it—I saw Gervaise Dumont's dead face, smaller, and discolored. Monsieur, it made me feel faint, like a child at sight of blood. For if it were not he, it was his double."

When I chided him, he only repeated himself, pale and chattering, as if it had been winter instead of summer, till I ordered him away, trying to order away with him the picture conjured by a drunken fancy, or by his experience—I cannot tell.

.

Fifteen years may make their differences, for no longer to the man of affairs may the

future be promiseful of castles in Spain, and the muscles have stiffened. Now, when the day may be over, and the creature comforts tend to content, I am apt to tell my story, possibly in the manner of approaching garburity.

II. A SIEUR DE BERTRAND



II.

A SIEUR DE BERTRAND.

“ARE you he—Michel Bertrand?”

IF at first I did not answer, this was because all that which I had thought to do was before, demanding action, till constraint slipped away like a coat which has fitted clumsily. Again he asked, more faintly, his uncertain eyes scrutinizing and shrinking from the gathering fierceness of my glance.

“Are you he in truth—Michel Bertrand?” His voice faintly declaring his knowledge of the answer without help from any word of mine. Yet I answered in tones escaping my intention of gentleness.

“ Once indeed I was he, Michel Bertrand, but now——”

For as I hesitated the whole past paraded ; first calling for revenge as I had suffered bitterly, and as the affront which he had put upon me had been grievous. With this mingled the consideration which had grown upon me, inasmuch as now my nature had changed, since my friend had shown the guise of enemy.

For there had been the sorry struggle of the Good and the Bad—betwixt the part belonging to God, and the other swayed by Satan—of the dreary hours teaching the Grace of the Good. Then, in the stillness of the night in the forest and the noisiness of my soul, the Evil sometimes had the better, till I curst God, and the Creation, and my birth. Yet, when the branches, bending in the little wind, alone answered, as if Heaven disdained my curses, I seemed to see my wretchedness like some outside observer ; and I beheld a man, left without saving

grace, in the lone comradeship of his own fiendish thought. Such in truth is the sulphurous flames of the Book ; and the torturing fiends are thoughts, wrought out without hindrance, to their own desolating End. Thus, since I was not in that drear Eternity, was I suffered to see the End which I was working for myself, the saving Grace opening the Future as it has to the saints heretofore ; and when Chance (by which often only the Will of God is signified) had delivered into my hand, as wickedly I had prayed it might, my enemy, the black purpose forsook me ; and I fell onto my knees, crying, struggling ; whence I rose, and, leaning toward him, I said softly, as the trial had taken from me my voice :

“Yes, 't is I, Michel Bertrand ; but fear not, O Jean de Prer, for the Grace of Jesu has chastened my spirit.”

Yet, as he gazed with question, again the Earth of me rebelled against the domination of the Spirit, and all that had gone before to

my ill showed forebodingly. My lips framed the effort of the Spiritual, and, lo, Peace descended.

“Yea, I am he ; and I have forgiven, as may I be forgiven.”

Thus was the marvel wrought, that I no longer sought his injury, and I gained the greatest victory of this life, even that over self ; not all at once, as I have said, but by degrees, in the blessed Solitude, which may soothe and righten the Spirit. (Yet, as verily, there be natures whom the lack of man’s comradeship may distort ; the physician must adapt his methods to his patient.) Thus, the wish to crush him who had deprived me of Hope was granted in a manner of which I had not dreamt.

.

Before he had been my enemy, he was my good friend,—a thing rendering his perfidy the more malicious, I had deemed, when the sore hurted keenly,—beyond any ground for pardon. For much I had done for him, my

friend. Strong and fine was he, deft at many things, either after the hounds, or in the battle, or turning the nimble phrase of wit ; a man to win a woman or to deserve a friend. Yet, while to him had been granted a clear fair face and agile limbs, and to me only insignificance, I was to the world mightier than he—the heir de Bertrand, and the most powerful Seigneur in Touraine. Undersized and mean, no man fancied me a Seigneur till he had been told, when, as our nature is, he might be all courtesies. This I knew ; yet I deemed that one at least saw that I could be gentle and faithful ; he was the right arm, strong where I was weak, a man to strive and serve for my friendship, not for gold. Do I not remember, even now in the wigwam of the Huron, how our comradeship ran ?

.

It chanced first that my father and I, in his train, were returning from Tours, when the storm forced us to seek lodging at a place

where we had seen the red roofs reaching upward through the leafy green of waving trees. For this my father knew as the house of a certain follower of his in the Italian wars, the Touranian captain, de Prer. While host and guest discussed the wine, I was left to wander at my will, lonely and sad as I was then always. To the bookish man, my tutor, alone was I of consideration, for my Latin; and I was not lacking in theology and metaphysics. But my father hated the weak, misshapen heir of the Bertrands.

Thus walking and musing in the house of the Touranian, de Prer, I became aware of a tall well-made fellow, who, striding to me, brought his hand down upon my shoulder, so that I reeled against the wainscoting.

"I will fight you, little weakling," said he. Yet, as I was, I flashed to anger, saying with a sword I could mock his fists. When he, jeering, gave me my humor, he cast my foil clattering, till, in anger at my weakness, I burst into tears. But when he pitied, I swore

that I wept not at him, rather since I could not tear him into pieces. Then his face softened in admiration of the raging heart, and we made the friendship which lasted till his perfidy.

.

For the name's sake my father plotted. Inasmuch as I seemed little likely to make the Bertrands mightier with my arms he designed a marriage, choosing the heiress of the great Comte de la Foix.

.

On a May day, at the Louvre, I first saw Mademoiselle. For there at Court, my father, taking me to a tall young lady, dark-haired, and of olive skin,—her mother being a Milanese—said, “This is he, Mademoiselle.” She turned her eyes scornfully, till I blushed in shame ; yet I bent the head not without certain grace. “Your humble servitor, Michel Bertrand.”

But she laughed her mockery : “Ah, Monsieur,” she ended more gently, because

pitying my chagrin, "if our families may have thought to bring us together, should we for their sake be fools?"

And she looked over and beyond with a sob in her voice.

.

Ah, fool was I indeed to dream that I could gain her heart. If they made our estates one, she and her beauty could not be mine.

.

For, though the World bowed the head, it saw only the empty show,—the gleam of light, not once suspecting the jewel's flaw.

.

And then was the dreariness. One morning, in wind and rain, I was chasing with horse and armed men him who had been the friend, and the other, who scorned and hated. And my heart was bitter; and I swore to slay them both after having given them to the torture.

But God cries halt to the wills of men;

and, pursuing, a frightful disease befell me ; and they escaped. Then was I despondent over Life itself ; and I seemed to have no Future ; and I noted my nurse, who leaned toward me when I muttered :

“ Life is folly,—nothing is left.”

“ The service of God, Seigneur de Bertrand.”

“ How matters that to me ?”

“ To you as to many a world-weary soul.”

“ But where may I find that service ?”

“ Does not the Society of Jesus offer to the weary Duty and forgetful Labor ?”

And the words were soothing. I thought more that I had failed in all than of Revenge ; and the gloomy World seemed Despair. Thus in garb and name the last Bertrand became Priest ; yet not in Soul.

.

For when I strove to put Holiness in the Thought, Revenge crowded mightily. I wrestled with wickedness ; yet was I weak ;—till I longed for service in a far land, to

silence there my murmuring heart. Then a duty was granted ; and I came to New France, and among the Iroquois.

.

In the stilly forest they laid before me the dying Captain ; and, looking at him, I deemed I knew him,—at first with fierce delight. For, lo, this was Jean de Prer ; and my struggle went on within me, till Heaven descended ; and I said, this time firmly :

“ My prayer is granted. I have seen you. But now I only would forgive, as may I be forgiven.”

And he, turning, uneasily for the musket wound, and for the more fearful one of his spirit, cried :

“ Truly are you revenged. For great Heart, I love you—yea have loved you always, even in my perfidy,—since you made conquest of me with your bravery at my churlishness.”

But I bent my eyes upon the crucifix, and,

methought, the Divine Figure there moved the lips. I saw, without once glancing toward him, a dark warrior peering at us twain ; and the Iroquois, dropping the canvas door, stole away. The Angelus rose, in that wilderness, from savage voices, as if it were distant Touraine.

“ And she,—she ? ” I questioned.

“ She is in the care of God,—whither I go. But you have forgiven ? ”

“ I indeed have forgiven.”

For, marvellously, their human natures had taken up my wrong, and punished them without my agency. For thus is the way of Heaven, as was granted me to know even in the far wilderness of New France.

.

Thence, when he was dead, a soldier of New France, I went farther into the wilderness among the barbarians, through the inland seas ; and there has been given me this work of Grace that the Soul might not destroy itself of its own dark

memories. Nor longer may the Devil tempt.
Yet do I not know, that in the moments of
Pride the Bulwarks should be most strong.

“ Father, forgive us our sins.”

.

And, lo, the tops of the forest shine with
the dawning Sun.

III. THE LADY AT THE DEATH.
(AN EXAMPLE OF THE MANNER OF
CHANCE CITED IN THE MEMOIRS OF
THE FIFTH LORD DUESDALE.)



III.

THE LADY AT THE DEATH.

(AN EXAMPLE OF THE MANNER OF CHANCE,
CITED IN THE MEMOIRS OF THE FIFTH LORD
DUNSDALE.)

I WAS conversing not long since with a learned man who has dealt, both in France and Italy, with the intricacies of the mind ; and in the disputation there entered the consideration of Chance, which the ancients personified as a goddess, Fortuna ; and I said that they did well in this, while my doctor maintained that man's will is mightier than any fortuitous circumstance. But I, on my part, held to my view, and cited many instances of things which, hap-

pening to me without any forethought of mine, had changed my life and influenced my character ; both in England, during the life of the late king, and under the new order, as well as when I was in France, and of certain experiences of mine in the Colonies. But, chiefly, I mentioned how the events of certain hours of a single day changed me from youth to man, and decided my life.

Now, having been led through these considerations, of the manner of Chance to this particular circumstance, I have thought to put the account to paper, both as a proof, and as, too, the matter, which took place long ago, is yet without explanation to many who consider it ; so that, aside from an argument in a disputation, a written word from me can be no more than is proper ; while I, who was concerned, can tell perhaps more fittingly than another (at least for my children's ears) how I gained much, and the strange manner thereof.

I have heard men drag out the preambles of their subjects so long that you care not for the account before it has once been touched upon. Lest I fall into so grievous an error, I will begin without parleying, or preambuling further, where the matter began for me, with the hunt of my Lord Falcon, whose hounds were then as celebrated as any in Surrey. Even now, these keep their fame ; for, only the other noon, I saw my little lad, who, too, bears the name Sylvester, playing with a pup in the park at Saint Croix ; and when I asked him where he had gotten the brute, he answered that Launt Fairweather had sent it him from Duesdale, and that it was out of my Lord Falcon's kennel. Do you wonder that I should tell this incident ? But God forefend the time when old age shall have taken from me my liking for a dog or a horse ; then surely my senses shall be outworn, and I shall be more dolt than man. The fate that attends the increase of years is a drying up of the blood,

and, through this, of the spirit ; and a yellow, wrinkled, parchment skin signifies, it is too like, a soul as withered.

But, if I am now approaching such an end very speedily, it was otherwise on the morning when I rode after my Lord Falcon's hounds.

This was a morning all clear and fair, when horses tossed the head and crunched the bit, wheeling about as if the air and the anticipation of the canter were like some fine, old, well corked wine. There was a blowing of horns, a huntsman's coat bright against the green, the muttering of hounds. From all the roads centring at Falcon's Wood came the gentry of the county. Yet, if I thought then that there could not have been a more goodly day or a finer company, I know now that the tumultuous blood of youth had much to do with the rosy coloring and the whole jocund event. With me were Bretherton,—whom I saw die before the Spaniards ;—and Symington, who now car-

ries much flesh and a nose red from smelling the cups. Then there was the host, the great Lord Falcon of strange nature. History has told what my Lord Falcon was like ; but I would wish to describe him as he impressed me then : a fat, little, rosy-cheeked man, who sat astride of his horse, till you would have thought he must be bow-legged ; and still you wondered how a man, such as he, could ride so fearlessly. You might be laughing, till suddenly he turned his head, and it seemed as if his piercing, cunning, black eyes burned out of their sockets into your brain. I do not know whether Lord Falcon intended this ; but he seemed to observe and to understand everything, till he, whom he noted, might be in alarm ; then all at once my Lord's eyes would be turned away, and you wondered what troubled you. My Lord Falcon had been in favor both with Royalist and with Roundhead ; and now, through some sly trick, he was well liked of the king ; though he, by covert and

villainous act, might make himself hated, he always was feared ; so my Father, teaching me the arts of the Court, while swearing my Lord Falcon to be of malicious mind, yet cautioned me that in the world it was needful to be of suave presence, even to those we hate.

The keepers were crying at the hounds, that, sniffing the fresh air, tugged at their leashes. I stood a little apart from the rest, by my mare Dolly and my man, Launt Fairweather, who was tightening the girth. Then Mistress Burlington, pulling on her glove, cried to me :

“ How comes it, Master Sylvester, that young gentlemen who have no time for courtesy toward their neighbors, can be after the fox ? ”

“ Ah, Madam, one cannot always do the pleasant duties.”

When Mistress Burlington, laughing, wondrously pretty I deemed then (I know now that the judgments of twenty of a pleasant day, are apt to be untrustworthy), called after

me, that I was learning aptly my Father's grace, and that she was glad I had not become too bookish (meaning, I suppose, not too disregarding of gallant things)—while she was speaking thus, I became aware of a lady, who was young, and of neat figure, and of the complexion of one who loves more than routs, or gallants, God's out-of-doors, and a horse, and the chase of the fox. Her black tossed his head viciously, while she talked to a gorgeous gallant, who grimaced, and leaned first on one toe, then upon another, as if, like Narcissus in the tale, he thought deeply of his own reflection. Yet, I knew that he could not see himself in this lady's clear gray eyes ; inasmuch she was thinking of the hunt, and of the moment when hounds, and horses, with the riders, should be chasing the fox ; and her countenance was a-flushing on this account, not for the phrases or love looks of Sir Narcissus. So intently did I regard her, as she rendered the other women inferior, that at first I

noted not the words of my man, Launt Fairweather, till he, becoming impatient, burst out :

“The girth is well tightened, and from the manner she sniffs, it may be a high hedge she ’ll refuse.”

“Of that am I certain,” quoth I, thinking of the lady before whom the gorgeous gallant was tiptoeing.

“Ah, master, she is pining for the run,” said good Launt, thinking I spoke of Dolly, the mare, upon which, with silly tingling, I recollected.

“Who may that lady be?” said I.

“Indeed, I know not that I have seen her before. But the gallant——”

“Yes, the gallant?”

“To whom she talks, is a Sir Rodney Benham, of Suffolk, I am told.”

Then was the whistling and crying to the dogs; and all were mounting. Pulling my Dolly about, I was by Mistress Burlington’s side.

“ Who may that young lady be ? ”

“ Ah, Master Syl.,” she cried. “ There is a young lady of spirit, who hesitates not at a horse, nor stops at a ditch ; and who cares more for a fox than for a gallant.”

But as she did not speak the name, I asked it again, while we swung into a canter.

“ Mistress Elizabeth Throckmorton,” said she.

But the hunt was in swing. First a halloing ; and we were on a brisk canter, till I found my Dolly flying over ditch and hedge, and the blood tingling through my veins ; and the joy of it rendered everything else, whether of sorrow or of pleasure, of small account. Presently I saw that I was drawing away from the crowd ; some were scattering ; many fell behind ; and I saw Bretherton's bay catching his front feet in the top of a hedge, and sending Bretherton sprawling ; then, instead of him, I beheld only the rim of wooded knolls to the left as I bore ; and the cries of the hunt died away

with increasing faintness, till I heard neither man nor hound. But, deeming that I knew the manner of the fox, I guided my Dolly up a gentle slope, at the top of which the mare, being, like her sex, given to unexpected things, suddenly careened ; and, as it was, though my knees clung tightly to her sides, I lost the stirrups, and like a boy, or a bookish and clumsy fellow, I grasped her mane. Yet, catching my toes, more like a horseman, I found the stirrups, till I brought her down on to her four feet, biting the bit and kicking, as she was. Then I saw that she had turned at the edge of a broad crevice, cut by a little stream in a clay embankment. Beyond lay a glade, between great oaks, where, in the shade from the sun, brilliant above, the hounds were baying over the dead fox ; while at a little distance, her hand on the bridle of her panting horse, was Mistress Throckmorton ; and I saw how fine was her contour against the setting of the oaks. When I had a voice, I called to her, making a courtesy :

“Indeed am I conquered by this sight,
—Diana, indeed.”

She turned toward me, with shrug of the shoulder.

“Compliment not me, but my good horse, that knew the way. You might have been before, Sir, if it had not been for the ditch.”

Again I bowed to her,—truly a Diana.

“Not in the ditch, so much as in your riding, is the cause, as you may see.”

As I spoke I was measuring the ditch, which indeed was broader than any I had tried up to that day; while I knew not whether the mare could carry so far without wings. Yet she was of good breeding, and her muscles could be stretched to the tension of flying. I drew her back a pace or more, doubting much whether I should not incur a sorry failure in my Diana's eyes. Then, scouting the idea, and declaring, like a follower of Mahomet, “Let what shall be, be,” I dug the spurs into the mare, putting her to the ditch. For a second it seemed as if she might refuse; but something of my resolu-

tion mastered her, till she pushed strongly into the space. For an instant the mare and I hung above the ditch ;—I could see Mistress Throckmorton regarding me with flushing cheeks ; and then the mare caught at the bank, stumbling, I think, and nearly unseating me ; yet, recovering, she dragged her weary self into the glade ; and straightway I dismounted by the young lady's side.

“ You may perceive it was not the ditch,” said I, with bravado.

“ Sir, your leaping was not bad. I wish I owned your mare.”

“ Indeed,” said I, bowing again, and thinking how much better a goddess was she than ever Diana of the Grecians, “ the mare belongs to her who was at the death.”

At which she laughed in gentle mockery, while the dogs sniffed and bayed with joy, and the horses panted.

“ Sir, I was not asking for your mare ; only admiring her.” And her eyes were bent on my Dolly, not on me, while I mut-

tered something that was phrased clumsily and unbecomingly ; and thus the hunt burst upon us, and in it came the gorgeous gallant, at whom I wondered, inasmuch as he preserved his clothes so unmussed from the exercise ; and straightway he was tiptoeing as before ; and she no longer noted even my Dolly ; till, like some solitary in an incongruous crowd, I was for mounting, and riding away, when Mistress Burlington, discerning me, beckoned ; and when I had approached, said she to the lady who had been at the death of the fox, and whom all were complimenting :

“ This is Master Sylvester, of Duesdale.”

Then the lady said, acknowledging me even before the gorgeous gallant, “ And he too was at the death.”

Yet, when I would answer fittingly, my tongue caught in my throat, and I could say nothing ; till again I was a solitary ; and, mounting my mare, I rode away like some awkward boy ; and I thought of my life, and

of things I had done, and of my experience with women. For then I was twenty, and had followed my Lord of Duesdale, my Father ; and had acquaintance even with ladies of the court, which rendered the stranger my clumsiness on that day before the lady at the death. And having been thus put out of countenance,—I knew not why,—I thought of a lady I had known at Court, and whom like a boy I had deemed I loved. But she, casting languishing glances at me, in the meantime told me I was only a lad, and she flew higher ; on another day that she was sorry for me, but she cared not for marriage. Thus I left my Father and went back to the university, with a heart that I fancied to be aching. Now, one day on the highway near York, where I had been to visit my aunt, I saw this lady borne by in a carriage, behind which were many postilions. Beside her sat a comely fellow. When she bowed sweetly, I doffed my hat with beating heart, till the gentleman with whom I rode said

that the comely fellow was her husband. In despair I spurred my horse down the highway, till my man, Launt Fairweather, overtook me, now walking and breathing hard.

“Why, Master?” questioned he. I turned about in my stirrups as disconsolately as the hero in the tragedy, if he had ridden.

“I loved that lady, and she told me that she would not marry.”

And good Launt laughed. “It is easy to see that you are at your books,” said he. “Do you not know that a gallant never can make love to a lady of the Court till she be married? Often I have heard your Father say so much.”

Then I put spurs to my horse. “I am a whimpering youngster,” I cried. “But presently I’ll be older; I’ll be older.” Ah, vain youth that I was! Presently I was in love again; only, when I found that she would love me, I saw that I liked her for the pursuit of her. When my Father would have me interested in Lady de Long, because she

was a great heiress, and a beauty, indeed, I liked her ; yet, when I had seen her a dozen times, I saw that she would lead her husband a dance, and that Kate, who was barmaid of the Mitre Inn, would have been as fine a lady, and no coarser, if Fortune had put her among the great.

Of these matters I reflected at the age of twenty, as I rode away from the hunt, being in discomfiture at my clumsiness before the lady at the death. Then, presently, I was aware of Bretherton, who was limping at his horse's side.

“ I have had a fall,” said he, looking about as a man may who finds himself observed when in sorry plight ; and he seemed so much as I felt that I even laughed ; when he was enraged and said he would fight me, I sobered, and said I :

“ I was laughing only because in you I saw my own reflection.”

“ Laugh on, laugh on,” said he, bitterly. But directly I knew he would forget his

anger and his plight, and would be capering, even while the fiddlers were a-tuning. But my plight was worse ; and I cared to be alone ; and thus, calling Launt Fairweather to me, I told him we should go back to Duesdale. And he came to me in bad humor, since he deemed that he might lose his ale and his cakes, and a dance with some buxom lass.

“ Your humor is bad, Launt,” said I.

“ Even so, Master,” said he.

“ But mine is worse,” said I, “ and you cannot expect to be pleasanter than your master.”

“ Nor do I ; nor do I ; but we lose a jolly time—a jolly time.”

“ What difference makes it,—if your lass should dance with a comelier fellow ?” quoth I.

“ That she would n’t,” answered he, as if I had gone mad. And, again, I laughed, and was glum in turn. And Launt followed like a sad chorus, as he was deprived of his

pleasure. But me he would have followed, though he might grumble, even to the cannon's mouth, since we had been brought up together, and had been play-fellows ; till he was older, when he was my body-servant ; nor a more quick and ready-witted knave I know not, as I could prove ; just as I can prove from my own life that Chance oftentimes is mightier than Will of Man.

Now, thus far, there has been naught out of the common in this account ; but directly I will show you how Chance pursued me fleeing it ; as the chance of Love or Death, however we may avoid, pursues us all. (I have heard philosophers say that the pursuer is only the Predestination of Heaven.)

Yet, that day I was not unlike my Father, who fled rather than tried to achieve things at which he was clumsy. Because I was not graceful, as the gorgeous gallant, I left the company at the hunt, and the lady at the death before whom I should have seemed unmanly. But my Father never was in a grace-

less plight ; since there never lived a more adroit and fine gentleman. At fifty his spirit longed for pleasure, and was as unsated as at twenty-five. Chiefly he was afraid of the dire Certainty ; and I have seen him, all a trembling at the grisly End, crossing himself, and bending before Father de Rand, the Chaplain. Yet he who so feared Death would face it on the field, or in a duel, for a woman's smile. This splendid gentleman was always my ideal, whose reproof I feared, and whose kind word was the pleasantest in the world. I tried to walk, to bow, to turn a phrase as he. Only when his wig was off did he appear like a common mortal ; but when his valet had dressed him, and there were no straying gray locks, no god could have been more noble, thought I.

Now that night at Duesdale when I was down-spirited and gloomy, I took Master Shakespeare's book, and tried to render myself of a humor as agreeably sad as Prince Hamlet's. Lost in my melancholia, I gave

small attention to Father de Rand,—whom I did not know to be at Duesdale ; till he passed through the library, not giving me word or glance ; as his habit was to come and go without warning. The two principal inhabitants of Duesdale,—since my Father was not often there,—we accepted each other's presence without word of question. He was to me, as I to him, like a fixture in the place, an accustomed chair, a servant's familiar face. Tall, wasted, like a student, and with restless little brown eyes, he yet, had a manner singularly unformed for a Jesuit ; not a kindly, nor a frank, but a keenly observant face ; a persuasive tongue, and, yet, a manner often repellant. On certain subjects of the Church he could gain an eloquence at once persuasive and commanding. I have seen him turn from my Father, declaring that he was a sinful man ; and when my Father cried out in despair, or was fierce by turns, he yielded not a point, but maintaining the same repellant manner,

seemed to deny the sinner the entrance to Heaven, till, to remove the denial, my Father was ready to yield, or promise aught. I saw easily that Father de Rand had other duties, more pressing than that of attendance upon the Deusdale parishioners. For this, as I say, his long absences implied ; and when he came and went no more attention was given him than on this evening, when my old hound, Ajax, disdained to raise his lashes at the accustomed step. The crackling of the logs seemed to be an accompaniment to the playwright's verse, till I fell to dozing. When languidly I might start up, the opened eyes could but note the portraits of the Duesdales, whose lives had been filled with passion, and cruelty, and trouble,—though now their names only might fill a page of fine historical writing. Among these I fell to studying the likeness of my grandfather by the great Van Dyck—(who painted men wisely, not so much as they appeared as their characters were ; as it has

seemed to me whenever I have seen in the Louvre that portrait, "Charles I., D'Angleterre," whose descendant is still my King, though now in England loyalty may be a forgotten accomplishment).

Thus I sat that particular evening in the library of Duesdale, melancholily perusing Master Shakespeare's melancholy play, when I heard a creaking of the ancient draw-bridge. For, at that time, this was still in use at Duesdale, though it was a poor enough defence, as my grandfather had found when a cannon and Cromwell's troopers brought him out of his refuge.

Listening, I made certain that the bridge was moving; when I went out into the court, where, in the scurrying rain, some score of fellows were gathered about a chariot, while a gentleman, or he seemed such, talked with Father de Rand. Since Father de Rand acted in most things for my Father, I first hesitated, shadowed by the door from the flickering torchlight. But the

Jesuit, seeing me, turned, saying that he to whom he spoke was Master Richard Burton ; and, then, the other doffed his hat, displaying the face becoming a handsome figure. Seemingly, an elderly man, he was of winning address ; and he said that he had stopped on his way to London, whither he was taking his ward. Now we three had entered the hall, and I saw that Master Richard Burton was an old man, marvelously well preserved ; for the candlelight displayed lines of emotion and action, a suspicion of wrinkles. And there followed a lady, accompanied by an old dame ; and turning about, with my feeling of clumsiness still controlling, as well as in great astonishment, I saw that she was the lady whom I had seen at the death. Yet, different was she from what she had appeared before ; for then her face was joyful in the sport ; now it was shadowed by trouble. Without noting either me or the priest, she regarded Master Burton.

“I do not understand you at all, Master Burton.”

“Indeed, am I mightily sorry,” he declared. “Appearances are against me ; but you will see later that I care only to get you from my Lord Falcon.”

Hereupon she burst into tears.

“Oh, that I should be so treated, and tumbled about from guardian to guardian !”

Then, with the suddenness of woman’s changing temper, she was regarding him through dry, flashing eyes.

“A young girl, Sir, is not a piece of baggage, as you may find. Oh, I am poorer in my freedom than the poorest girl in England !”

There had followed the lady out of the court an old wrinkled dame ; and to her Master Burton called, picking from a table a candlestick, and directing her to accompany Mistress Throckmorton to her chamber. Whereupon the lady laughed outright.

“You have me guarded now, and in your

power. But if I can thwart you,—if I can, neither you nor my Lord Falcon shall profit from my estate.”

Here her eyes wandering uncertainly, rested upon me, I thought with appeal ; but I, in the hall, stood there in momentary silence, like a clown ; yet, I had reason ; for I knew not but that Father de Rand, who certainly appeared to have a clear understanding with Master Burton, might not be acting for my Father in the matter. From outside entered the shouts of Master Burton’s men, who already were eating and quaffing ale, as if they at least doubted not the freedom of the house. And I was angered at not having been consulted at all, while the lady, whom I had met so lately at the death of the fox, seemed wondrous fair. As she turned to follow the old dame, her companion, I stepped forward now, more as a man than a simpleton, and, bowing, I asked if she remembered me. And she looked about uncertainly.

“ You are indeed he who took the ditch ?
—And his friend ? ”

She pointed in question to Master Burton.

“ He and you are my Father’s guests for the night, Mistress. But before this I never have seen him. ”

When I answered her, trying in eagerness to free myself from the imputation, the calm voice of the Jesuit interrupted.

“ I may explain that Mistress Throckmorton has been adjudged the ward of Master Burton over Lord Falcon by the King. And these guests stop for the night on the road to London. ”

She had turned about, facing us, while the dame stood with the candle still raised partly, as if waiting for further word from Master Burton. A smile gathered, of disdain of both the Priest and of him he had declared her guardian. But, when she spoke, it was not impatiently, so much as sadly.

“ I, Master Sylvester, of Duesdale, am in dispute between these two, Master Burton,

and my Lord Falcon ; because my estate is great, and I have no relative on God's earth. I am impatient at some of the proceedings of these guardians,—this is all."

Thereupon, I was constrained to say :

" I would offer my poor service, Mistress."

But Master Burton interrupted with splendid disdain.

" Pardon, Master Sylvester of Duesdale, I must ask you, since I have Lord Duesdale's sanction, not to interfere in my affairs with my ward.

Now I, seeing in her face which seemed to say, " Believe me, before him," answered quite as splendidly, that even if he might be her guardian, not on that account did it become me to forget my manners as a gentleman ; and I was noting her fine face, that now was rosy, and anon paled, as she passed from one to another emotion. Master Burton paced the room up and down, his hands stuck in his doublet, nor was it hard to see that he was beside himself with rage.

“I even have a score of armed men making your Father’s courtesy imperative upon you, Master Sylvester,” said he.

The Priest, too, laid his hand upon my shoulder, as he might reason with a child. “Suffer not your anger to forget your manners ; nor do you make yourself a fool, I pray you.”

Now Master Burton was speaking with calm precision to his ward.

“I must ask you again to go to your room, Mistress.”

And she looked at him, defiantly, it appeared to me, yet saying :

“I will obey, Sir, since I must.”

I saw her turn about, while the dame, lifting a candle with one hand, threw back the door with the other ; and the lady, pausing for a single instant, glanced back to me.

“To-day, Sir, I thought you brave as you leapt your mare” ; as if she even implied the opposite ; for an instant I saw her, and the old dame, and Dame Fairweather waiting

in the hall beyond, and then they had gone behind the closing door.

“She has much spirit,” quoth Master Burton, nodding to the Priest, and again walking to and fro before the fire, which lit his face fitfully. “Such a lass may turn a man’s resolution, and I can pardon, Master Sylvester, your forgetfulness of the courtesy fitting your Father’s guest.”

Already I had been thinking of the words I might have uttered, and that would have sounded becomingly, but such as had not come to my tongue; as is often our poor human way after graceless action. And when my Father’s guest had ended speaking, I was in high rage, which burst out beyond control.

“If this, Sir, were not my own house, I would force your pardon down your throat.”

While he paused, with jaw dropped in amaze, and the Priest’s face, too, on me, I turned my back upon them; and the room, lest I might say that which should be even

more unbecoming, considering that he was the guest of Duesdale. Now at the door I stumbled over the old hound, Ajax, that, rising, fawned upon me.

“Ah,” I said in chagrin, “you at least see me at my best.” And the hound followed with noiseless sympathy to my room, where I sat in reflection that was bitter and self-reproachful.

Again I saw her in the glade against the background of the old oaks ; and, now, so strangely in the hall of my own house, disputing with him who claimed the right of guardian ; but whose face, though finely formed, and possessing, moreover, the mask of worldly wisdom and craft, yet I trusted not, and I understood that Master Burton and the Church wished for the control of Mistress Throckmorton’s estate, and that my Father abetted the plan, which had, too, the King’s support. Lord Falcon was a Protestant, and unscrupulous enough. But that which troubled most, was that she herself

was not pleased with Master Burton's course, nor at his manner of taking her from my Lord Falcon's charge ; and I thought of her last taunting remark, as she had left me.

She was, then, of more than ordinary attraction ;—since, I have known many acknowledging her beauty ; and this may explain why I thought so deeply upon the matter, and why I was chagrined over the clumsy manner in which I had left her in the hunt, and over my boyish action in my own house. And at last, in the darkness, with the hound as comrade, I came to the resolution to see her again that night, and to offer her my service for whatever she might wish. I may wonder at this now that I am old ; and at the small cause provoking me to prove to her that I was no idle tool of Master Burton, nor of any man, even of Lord Duesdale himself ; and that I would do aught she might wish. The resolve, indeed, as you may say, was not of Chance ; yet the circumstances leading thereto were certainly chance

ones, as the keenest logician needs must acknowledge. And my chamber became unbearable, and I must act, to find her.

Now my man Launt Fairweather's room, was not far removed; and I stole through the sleeping house to the place. The door being unlatched, I heard his hard breathing; while through the window was the faint pattering of the storm as if it were near clearing.

“Launt, Launt.”

Instantly he had me by the arm, with a cry that I thought must have shaken the dead.

“Be still,—’t is nobody.”

“Master Sylvester?”

“Yes, I.”

By this he was in his senses, and I told him to find from his mother, Dame Fairweather, or by his own observation, where Mistress Throckmorton was, and then to return very quickly to me. Speedily, without any question, he was up and dressed, as he

always has been, the most ready knave in the world. He left me waiting in the place ; for I should have liked better to have him caught than that I myself should be in the plight. I thought of many things as I waited, yet, having once decided on an undertaking, it was my manner, when a youth, to carry this through at whatever cost to prudence.

Presently Launt declared himself, closing the door softly,

“I found fellows drinking ale in the kitchen. So I went round about to the North Tower, and there——”

“And there?”

“And there, through a crack of the door, I saw the lady writing at the table, while the old dame sat near, stitching. Then I turned about, and as I turned, I heard steps. Quickly, as you have seen me Master, I tiptoed the other way, dropping behind a chest ; and, as he passed, I, trembling, saw that it was Father de Rand. He went to the Mistress’ door and back.”

“And you are here? I understand,” said I, meaning more that I had my plan definitely thought out than that I comprehended his proceedings afterward. And I told him to go to the stables as stilly as he could, and to saddle my Dolly, and a horse of high spirit, which I doubted not that a lady who had been at the death might manage. Then Launt was to wait for me, till I signalled ; and if any one of Master Burton’s men bothered, he was to silence him, if possible by a wrestling trick I had taught him, and which I had learned at Christ Church, from a Spaniard, a servant of Sir Daniel Milo, whose mother came from Andalusia, as you know. By this, catching a man from behind and grasping his Adam’s apple, you can silence and gag him with the free hand. Or, if this should be impossible I directed Launt, by such means as he might devise, to gain me a road for escape, such as I should need.

Yet, I knew not what she might wish ; and the plan must have seemed whimsical in truth

to another. Launt but nodded, taking my word, which he went to fulfil. When we should be in the court,—if she should wish to avail herself of my service, and if I were not crazy, after a notion,—the greatest danger would be the lowering of the creaking draw; that certainly would waken all. Then, I decided, as I went softly through the halls, like a thief in my own house, we must dash our horses on; and I swore we should not be taken.

If she should wish my service! Like a sorry fool I paused, feeling the folly of the plan. Presently I saw on the floor a bar of light from the crack between the wainscoting and the door. The house was still, save for the wind, and, standing there with my intention I heard the scratching of a pen. Then I knocked lightly; and, throwing back the door, I stepped in, closing it, and timid over my own daring. First, strange as it may be deemed, I noted the old dame, her sewing dropped into her lap, a thimble between

her long fingers, and her face in startled fright ; but Mistress Throckmorton had turned half about towards me, her hair straying over her face, which, too, looked astonished question.

“ Mistress,” I said, gaining my voice, “ I knew that you were dissatisfied with being detained here, through that which you said when I stood listening like a clown. Now I would show that I am not what I appeared ; but can act, perhaps rudely, yet as you may wish. If you may be tired with following Master Burton I will take you wherever you may direct.”

And now, my own words lending me courage, I bowed before her, as a knight, I thought then, offering service to a lady. For I was but twenty and she was a fair woman.

Both she and the old dame had not found tongue for astonishment, till I ended the words, which sound in the memory as these I put to paper.

“Are you mad, Sir?”

“Mad and rude,” said the old dame. But now indeed I was decided to bear out the adventure becomingly.

“One I may be,” said I, “perhaps even the other. If Mistress Throckmorton wishes to make an outcry, she even may. But as for you, good woman of Master Burton, you must not speak nor utter a sound, or I swear I will gag you, and carry Mistress Throckmorton away,—if she so may wish?”

“If I may wish?”

Now the old dame slunk away into a corner as if the violence of my entrance left small doubt of my persistence, even in gagging her, and she was trembling. With one eye upon this keeper, I yet watched the lady, who had risen facing me; and her countenance drove me almost into despair at my poor, foolish methods.

“Yes, if you would, Mistress Throckmorton, I will help you to escape. I can do nothing more than this. Can you forgive

me? My rudeness? My violence? This entrance, beyond pardon, it seems? Yet in my own home Master Burton's score of fellows render me so powerless that I had no other method of communicating with you save this rude one. Ah, Mistress, I only would do your bidding, to show that I was not unmoved. If you may wish to be out of this self-styled guardian's power, I will take you from him, or I will die for your whim!"

"Indeed, Sir," said she, while the old dame chattered from the corner, "I never knew a man such as you. I understand you not. You come—"

"Or go, if you so bid."

"—to take me away."

"To atone for my powerlessness to play the host]worthily when my Father's house is taken from my control."

Then suddenly she was laughing, though for an instant I thought the laughter was tears.

"Thank you, thank you, Sir; never was I

served like this. Surely you outstrip the gallants all. You are—”

“ Mistress Throckmorton, your servant, if you will accept my service.”

But suddenly out of her alarm and confusion appeared a resolution such as was to be expected of one who rode so daringly after the fox.

“ Your idea? Your manner? Yet I like your face.”

“ Mistress,” reasoned the old dame. But I looked at her with fierceness till she trembled and said no more. In a still, soft voice Mistress Throckmorton questioned :

“ You come to take me away?—to free me?”

And I bowed as gracefully as I could. Now indeed she was as she had looked in the hunt.

“ Sir, your entrance has been strange, and my decision will appear stranger. I even will go.”

Then was I glad that I had dared.

“Now at once, where you will.”

“But what may happen to you.”

“It matters not for me. I am strong for my own matters; you are a woman, treated as you do not like.”

“To save me? to free me! I thank you, Sir.”

Gently she put her hand in mine, and I, like the worshipful youth I was, raised it to the lips.

As I waited she came back softly.

“I wronged you; I taunted you. Can you forgive?”

“Can I thank you enough for this chance of showing that I am not a clown?”

“Rather are you a friend to a helpless girl,” said she.

So gathering boldness with success, I told her that it was needful to be away without delay.

Then, when Mistress Throckmorton was ready, I turned toward the dame, warning her not to make outcry. Yet from the North

Tower I knew that her cries were not likely to carry ; and I turned the lock.

“ Now, stilly, Mistress,” I whispered. I only heard her quick breathing, as we turned out of the corridor, down the narrow steps. Suddenly, some one came toward us. Though I could not see in that dark place, I drew her against the wall. And she understood, though I felt her hand tremble against my shoulder. The step was nearer ; yet nearer ; and I thought our breathing was louder than the roll of cannon. Slowly the sound passed like the steps of an old or weary man ; and, without suspecting once, he had gone toward the North Tower.

But we went down the corridor, and to the little door that opens on the court. The bolt seemed to clang out upon the stillness, till we were in the court, with the rain upon our faces.

“ Master Sylvester ; Master Sylvester,” came Launt’s voice ; and directly we were by the horses. I bent forward, and lightly, as

one who knows a horse, and whose muscles are supple, she was in the saddle.

Launt faded into darkness, while we waited for the creaking of the draw, and the dash beyond into darkness.

“You are a brave man.”

“There is much yet.” Her hand fell upon my shoulder. An unsteady voice, wording some ale-house song, preceded uncertain steps ; and then he had gone beyond, though, if he had had his senses, he must have heard. A cry, as if from the tower we had left, followed, and I thought of the old dame, on whom I had turned lock and key.

“Will he ever lower it?”

“You shall get away ; I have sworn it, Mistress Throckmorton.”

“I am not now afraid ; but—— Oh, Sir, now you may wonder at my poor spirit.”

“Oh, Mistress Throckmorton, do you trust to me.”

Then very simply said she, “If I had doubted should I have followed?”

“ Believe me ; and may I serve you worthily ! ”

Suddenly the draw creaked.

“ Now,” I whispered, for silence could no longer be our part. Shortly Master Burton would be after ; and we dashed across the ancient moat of Duesdale into the pitchy darkness. For an instant I thought of Launt certain of discovery, perhaps of punishment. But he had good wit ; and with me lay the more important adventure.

“ At least we have a good start.”

“ Was there ever a girl like me ? ” she cried.

“ None so brave a rider.”

“ None, Sir, so imprudent.”

“ Ah, you doubt me ? ” said I, with foolish repetition.

“ Can you ask, Master Duesdale ? ” answered she, as if I had not before been assured.

But here, partly since I felt foolish, I pulled back my Dolly, calling to my comrade to rein her horse.

“I know a little lane that may lead them astray.”

Then dismounting, I raised the latch of the gate, which opens on a lane—years since this was closed—that led then for miles through the fields of Duesdale to Far Duesdale and the Windsor Road. No noise of pursuit came as yet from Duesdale ; only our own horses, and the dripping from the trees ; for the rain was stopping.

“In there ?” she questioned.

When she was beyond, I led in Dolly, latching the gate.

“We will walk the horses,” said I, mounting. “A rainy night is fitted to such an enterprise ; since many sounds may absorb our horses’ steps.”

As the horses walked, Mistress Throckmorton in silence and I embarrassed, knowing not what to say, the landscape grew grayish out of blackness, and presently I saw we should have the moon.

“Shall it be to my Lord Falcon’s ?”

“Not there. Have I not fled these gentlemen who dispute over my estate !”

Silently we rode till again I asked.

“But where, Mistress ?”

“As you may like, Sir.”

Presently her voice began.

“If they should overtake ?”

“We have the start ; they shall not take us, unless you may wish it ?”

“I wish it ?—When I have followed ? But am I not a foolish maid ? I hated Master Burton. I dreamed of my freedom. Yet, when I have it I know not how to use it.”

I knew not how to answer ; and, again, was timid before her, as I had been when I had left her at the hunt.

“Ah,” I cried in despair, “I would that I had a smooth tongue to tell you that which is nimble in my thought, but clumsy upon the tongue. I would I were a gallant, such as he whom I saw with you at my Lord Falcon’s !”

Thereupon she laughed merrily.

“Do you think, Sir, that he would have acted for me as you? Indeed I would not have such as he. And what a risk are you taking for me; disgrace from your father; I know not all.”

“I care not,—if you are free to act as you will!”

“You care not?”

“Yes, I care for the adventure only as it may result happily.”

And she said softly: “I know not a man who cares not more for the world than any woman, however he may forswear himself. I saw, behind their protestations, their natures, even when the he was that Benham whom just now you were envying. As for the other, the suitor of Master Burton's choice, I have not given him a fancy.”

Yet I said nothing, like some foolish boy.

“But, Sir, I will suffer no man to choose my suitors; nor will I go back to Master Burton; nor to my Lord Falcon; nor to any one who holds me less than my estate. Sir,

I am free, on a rainy night, with a cavalier strong and daring to bear me to safety."

Her shy laughter gave me heart.

"Are you not wet through? But it is clearing?"

"Perhaps; I have not noted. Do you not deem that your entrance to me and the dame was rude?" she asked, in the queer humor of women.

"Yes, rude; yet how could I have done otherwise?"

"No one in the world would have done as you, Master Duesdale."

"Ah, I know it—I was foolish; no, not foolish, since now I am riding with you." For I began in some clumsy manner to remember the phrase of a gallant.

Even if there had been pursuit, I deem I should not have noted it while she talked, till, in forgetfulness, I found a voice for my thought, forgetful of gallantry in truthfulness.

"And are you not brave and womanly—to read that I am trustful? I saw you in the

glade between the oaks, while the hounds were about the fox, and I said, There at least is a woman whom it would be sweet to know." And I believed I meant as I spoke.

"Ah, you do not know women. Are you, too, a silly gallant?"

"Have I played his silly part?"

"No, I think not—altogether."

"Oh, Mistress Throckmorton, I even mean all I tell you, though at the hunt, as well as at Duesdale, I acted like a very boy."

"I thought that—once," said she, demurely.

"And now," I cried, "I have met you only to lose you. There be a few miles, and the companionship shall be ended."

Yet, when I had spoken, I fell to trembling; and in the moonlight, through the breaking clouds, I saw her turn her face, at which I wondered.

"I did not think you unfair—not once,—so to take advantage."

Straightway to myself I was offender,

and, against the heart, I rebelled upon her reproof.

“ I have lost my sense ; pray forgive.”

“ And I——”

As she paused, I questioned.

“ And you ?”

“ It matters not, Sir,” said she.

Thus we rode in silence, passing no one on that lonely lane, nor hearing whether they followed, nor did Mistress Throckmorton speak more ; and I was pityful for her, and in anger at myself. And, at last, so that we knew it not, on account of our intent thought, the morning light came over the hills and dimmed the moon, till we were riding by the day through the fields, while, on occasion, some rural fellow might stare at us, or a maid, or a dame, or a colt, or a cow, or a little lad driving swine ; and some bowed to me, but mostly they knew me not—only looked the query in stupid astonishment ; yet on that way, which was not public, as I have written, we were the only wayfarers.

“Whither do we go?” she asked ; and I saw that her face was tired and paled, and again I was pityful of her.

“First to the village, Far Duesdale, and then to London—and then where you will.”

“But I have no will.”

“Ah, Mistress, I know not what to do ; nor do I know aught in this foolish adventure, save that I swear to take you where you may wish.”

And she spoke softly, her face no longer seemed pale, while her eyes wandered about the landscape :

“Nor do I know more than you.”

Shortly she asked, strangely indeed, for she had not seemed froward :

“Did you ever know one so froward?”

And I spoke my thought in a tone of jest :

“Nor a braver, nor a finer lady, who can manage a horse and not turn pale over danger ; and whose heart is sweet and a good woman’s, though not over-prudish. She

shall be my goddess ; and her, if I ever marry, I shall marry."

"Do you know this Her, Sir Prattle?" asked she softly.

"Yes, Mistress,—even you."

"Ah, you prattle indeed. How may you? Directly you will be repenting all these fine speeches to her you never had seen two days gone."

"Do you think me dull and fickle?" cried I, foolish prattler of twenty.

"You are too brave for so sad a character. Yet, they say brave men forswear themselves with women ; and you are impulsive."

And I—but it matters not,—that which I said. (I deem such speeches sickish to those who may not be in love ; and silly to those who may have common-sense, or who hold a woman a caprice ; and I had better say no more of this, lest I be deemed a fool ; but instead, I will carry the adventure to an end. And I know that you, whoever you may be, that read this account, will see clearly that

Chance, rather than any Will of our own, counts for most in this Life ; and indeed, as I have said, I can bring bearing on the argument, many things which have happened to me.)

In the village of Far Duesdale the living was held at this time by a certain Vicar, John Nicholas, who stood much in awe of my father, and who liked me, inasmuch as his sons had been my play-fellows. One of these I secured lately a clerkship in Lord De La-Ware's plantation, over the seas. It was to this vicarage that I destined to take Mistress Throckmorton. But talking over the matter, I considered that it would be more prudent to go beyond Far Duesdale, to Mistress Burlington's place. As we reined our horses, the Vicar stared mightily hard, and questioned whence we came, and who the lady might be ; but standing there and Mistress Throckmorton having alighted, I said : " I would have you get for us a chariot."

And he objected much, saying that he did

not comprehend, till I was angered at his obstinacy, and drawing my sword, I swore that I should run him through if he did not do my bidding. But Bess (for it seems more natural that she should be made Bess than Mistress Throckmorton) berated me here, saying I was too peevish. Then I declared that I was only froward that, if caught, we might defy her guardians, and leave them to tear themselves in pieces like mauling cats ; for we should be out of reach of their power to hurt. And anon, I grew fierce, as Master Nicholas, the Vicar, tried to steal away ; till out of very fear he was constrained to obey, though saying : “ I know not what trouble this may bring me to.”

“ Talk not,—but act !” cried I, “ for I am her guardian.”

Then Bess declared slyly, “ That you indeed are not.”

“ I am now your guardian, at least before God, who regards not Papist more than Protestant.” And I told the worthy Nicholas to tell

my Lord Falcon, or my father, or any who censured, that I, Sylvester Duesdale, not he, was blameworthy, if any blame might be given. And she, my Bess, stood there without a word; and I saw that she was tired from the excitement which might have tired a strong man.

Shortly the Vicar came again: "'T is strange, Master Sylvester,—indeed I fear to. How are you changed?"

"Leave the matter to me, you dolt," said I in anger. "Only find a cart or chariot for my lady."

"Oh, am I tired," said she, breathing hard. But I whispered: "An half hour more, brave heart." Then we should be at Mistress Burlington's who was a whimsical, just lady, such as would be likely to aid Bess; thence, I said, I should go on to Court to lay the matter before the King; since its suddenness, which is almost beyond belief, might be taken up against us, and I, like a man, must face the gossip and accusation.

“ But I cannot see you go ! Who can tell what may happen ? ” cried she, when I told her that we had dared much, and that more it behooved us to do to carry the adventure to a becoming end. Thus we rode to Mistress Burlington’s place, leaving the swains of Far Duesdale, their gossip, and Father de Rand, and Master Burton our trail, if they might think to follow. For we were drunken with boldness, and I felt able, weary as I might be, to handle singly twoscore fellows. Yet first, as I say, I considered her who was a-tired through the strangeness of that night, and its flight, and on account of the hunt of the yesterday.

Thus, discussing many things, we came to Mistress Burlington’s, daring for the future to be passed together. I deem that no one was more in wonder than Mistress Burlington of that morning ; she called us mad, then silly, and anon, strange ; she trembled over that which Lord Falcon might do, and the King, and my father ; but, like a woman,

she ended by siding with us, while she declared that she knew not how a country gallant, such as I, could dare to run away with a lady wooed by courtiers and the great. But my Bess said, that none had my wit. Then Mistress Burlington declared that we both must rest, and that we were silly children. And when Bess had gone Mistress Burlington queried :

“ Do you know that there is no greater heiress in the kingdom ? ”

“ Nor care I,” said I.

“ Ah, you are a child,” said she. In laughter she declared that never had she read in Romance, or indeed anywhere, of such an escapade ; and she wondered about its end, and what the King’s pleasure would be, and the consequence to herself in abetting us. But first, said she, I should rest, and then we could consider the matter. Thus she left me to my weariness,—good heart that she was.

Now, I was awakened by a noise, as of a

knocking below. In a daze I thought first that all had been a dream ; and, again, that as I slept Bess had been taken from me. As I lay there in such uncertainty, while the sunlight streamed into the room, came a lackey of Mistress Burlington, saying that she craved to see me, and that there were two below with her. Then, hastily, I went down, and I saw the pale Jesuit, seeming as if he had slept not a wink, and Master Burton who had forgotten his urbanity, as a man may a false face which has hidden him in the masquerade. My hand slipped to my sword when I saw the pair,—not knowing what to expect ; yet, with certain assurance, which had come to me during that night, I tried to don Master Burton's mask ; at which he became the angrier, while Father de Rand observed me slyly.

“You have fooled with daring ; and I swear you shall suffer,” said Master Burton.

And I bowed my head, since indeed I might not have seemed well to another in the affair.

“I have no word of explanation ; yet if your grievance demands, I am not afraid to meet you.”

His hand was on his sword as if then and there he would have taken my word. But Father de Rand stepped forward, laying his hand upon Master Burton’s shoulder.

Now, the lady whom I had aided—whom yesterday at the death of the fox I first had seen—had entered to us disputing, and her hand rested on my shoulder.

“You and my Lord Falcon, Master Burton, were in dispute over my person and estate. With you, the King sided ; but I, Sir, have acted for myself, and chosen to appeal from your guardianship.”

Master Burton’s words seemed to catch in his throat, while it was Father de Rand who spoke, calmly, yet I knew well the passion hidden in the masterful voice.

“I know not the change in Sylvester Duesdale. Surely he, and you it seems, must be mad.”

Then Mistress Burlington, who had stood aside till now, answered with firmness, and the obstinacy of woman,

“ These children came to me a short hour ago. As I understand,—you, Master Burton, and my Lord Falcon, are in dispute over the guardianship of her person, and of the estates which her father left her in England and Virginia ? ”

“ Yes, Madam ; and the King has decided for me,” said Master Burton.

“ But now, this matter has taken a new face from the foolish flight away from Duesdale. While I will not dispute your claim to the young lady, I deem that I should only incur trouble to myself, if I did not keep her till I shall hear how the law and the King may will.”

My Bess was sobbing on our friend's shoulder, as if her heart would break ; and I believe if Mistress Burlington had not decided even as she did, I then and there should have slain Master Burton.

“Madam,” said the Priest, “do you know that thus you bring yourself into the matter, becoming an abettor of Master Burton’s grievance?”

“I care not,” said Mistress Burlington. “I will deliver the young lady to him the judges may decree. Till then shall I keep her; nor do I deem that after the circumstance, I should be right in doing otherwise.”

Thus they disputed over Bess, while I tried to soothe her sobs. But Master Burton and the Priest were unable to do aught, inso-much as Mistress Burlington was in her own house, surrounded by her servants, and, moreover, was powerful through her relatives at the Court. Sullenly they went away, threatening many things; when we, fearing that they might come again with justice’s writ, Mistress Burlington had out her chariot; and we hastened to Whitehall.

But now the account has gone far enough I deem, to show how the manner of Chance was in the matter; and I will on to the end,

since the further circumstances bear not directly upon the argument. I need but say what the world knows, that the acquaintance, begun so strangely, ended in our becoming—after trials and patience—man and wife; when all who would have rejoiced at our failure, equally were glad at our success,—such being the Nature of the Human Temper. My Father, though at first he had been in rage, at the end was not averse to the circumstance, bringing a great estate to Duesdale. For Mistress Burlington had pleaded well our cause, and when all was heard by those in Power, I was summoned to the King, who, at first, was stern, and then, falling into laughter, cried that I was after his heart. And I, bending the knee, swore that I would serve the house of Stuart, even to the last. Again he laughed, saying: “I should have done even the same with so fair a lady.”

“And I, Sire, will serve you always,” I cried again, nor have I forgotten the word thus given, and now, though William of

Orange may be in England, I, an exile like my King, in France, will not rest till a Stuart shall have his own again. And she, my Bess, has the same will to teach our children ; for I cannot bear a man who changes his politics ; for, say I, next he will be for changing his religion, or his wife, like the fickle fool he is.

Inasmuch as it is permitted to no one to do aught of moment in this world without incurring enmity, by the adventure I gained the ill-will not alone of Master Burton, but of the other, the great Lord Falcon, since these villains were enraged that so rich an estate had escaped them ; and as they both maliciously regarded their own evil prosperity of greater moment than to protect the orphan, their ward. Yet by this time, having my father and the King as my abettors, I feared not ; and I told those villainous gentlemen that I would fight them if they thought themselves aggrieved ; but they both liked better craven arts than the open

duel. Nor do I deem that their enmity has redounded to my injury ; while through incurring it, I won the greatest Prize, a wife after my own mind, whom, I trust, Heaven has not suffered to be sorry for her choice, since I, on my part, never have had regret for the wooing which begun so suddenly, and, now that I am old, it seems imprudently. But Twenty esteems Prudence of different quality than Seventy.

Thus, as I say, did Chance, which the ancients made a Goddess, bring about a matter of great moment for me ; and many circumstances in my life might be cited in the Disputation, proving, to the satisfaction of learned Doctors, that Fortuitous Circumstance often is mightier in our careers than our own Wills.



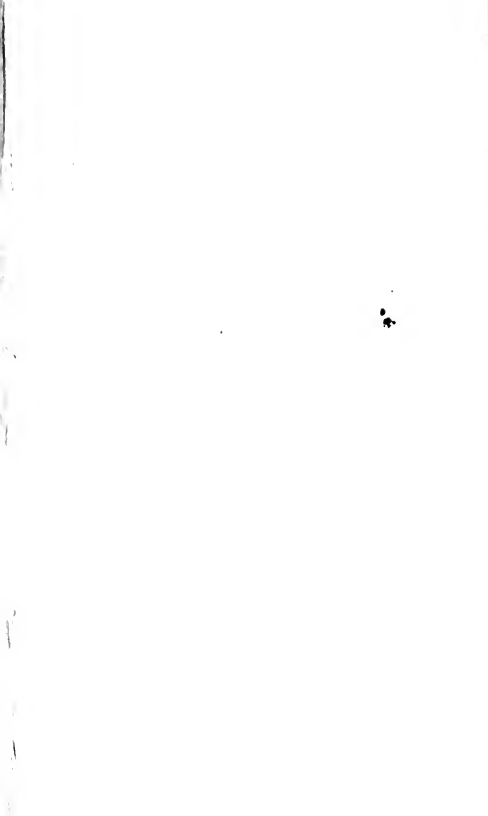
THE EPILOGUE.

AT the end, when the play has been played, and while the stage carpenters somewhere are putting away the painted furniture, the epilogue is spoken ; seriously, for the play is done, and naught may blot its errors ;—and yet spoken with a certain note of self-praise, since human nature must flaunt its work a little, lest no other soul be found to do that act of courtesy. Thus deprecatingly, yet boastfully, the owner of the Chateau by the Loire bore out the part of Epilogue to the tales now told ; while the listeners were upstirring, like folk drowning the last, perhaps finest, lines of the play in their shuffling haste to be

gone ; some muttering criticism, as “ melo-dramatic,” “ false to life,” “ violating the laws of fiction.”

“ Perhaps,—even likely,” nodded he who posed the Epilogue, “ the adventures of these dead gentlemen were of an old fashion now derided, of a story for a story’s sake. Far be its defence from me ! Rather will I ask favor of those liking simple cheer, and old books, old friends, old wine——” The words not ended still hummed confusedly without sensible sound ; for the sun had burst the bonds of the clouds, till matter-of-fact lay in glaring yellow across the age-darkened oak of the floor.





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